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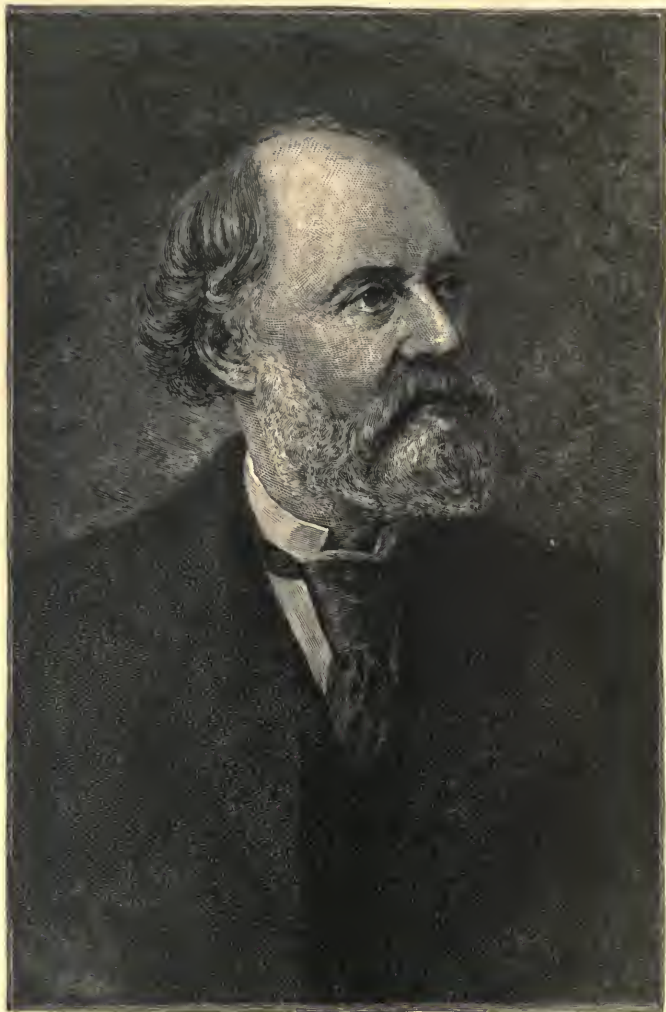




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CHARLES READE.

FROM THE PAINTING BEQUEATHED BY MR. READE TO MESSRS. HARPER & BROTHERS.

CHARLES READE

D.C.L.

DRAMATIST, NOVELIST, JOURNALIST

A Memoir

COMPILED CHIEFLY

FROM HIS LITERARY REMAINS

BY

CHARLES L. READE

AND THE

REV. COMPTON READE

NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE

1887

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AND THOSE MANY OTHERS WHO KNEW AND LOVED

CHARLES READE,

This Volume is Inscribed respectfully

BY THE COMPILERS,

C. L. R.

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P R E F A C E.

THIS biography is offered to the public as a compilation. It will be found to contain both unpublished MSS. of Charles Reade, and also fragments of his correspondence, with numerous extracts from his diaries. These have been selected with care, from a voluminous mass of literary and personal remains, individually by Mr. Charles L. Reade, the deceased author's literary executor and residuary legatee. In this selection he has been guided solely by what he believes to have been the wishes of Charles Reade and the reverence due to his memory.

The narrative portion of these volumes, indeed their entirety, apart from the matter which emanates from Charles Reade's own pen, has been written by the Rev. Compton Reade, on whose shoulders therefore devolves primarily the responsibility of authorship. The compilers deem it due both to themselves and to their readers thus precisely to define their respective shares in the book as a whole. So far as regards what is here presented of Charles Reade's manuscript, Mr. Charles L. Reade stands accountable; on the other hand, the biography, as such, with whatever opinions are here hazarded on men and things, must be referred absolutely and exclusively to the

Rev. Compton Reade, who has written from the standpoint of a near relative, of a foundation member—for a quarter of a century—of his uncle's college, and of a close literary association.

The compilers have with gratitude to express their obligation to Arnold Taylor, Esq., of the Local Government Board, for his valuable communication in reference to the authorship of "Masks and Faces," to which they desire to direct the especial attention of all interested in our national drama; to the Rev. C. Graham, Minister of the Avenue Chapel, Shepherd's Bush, for permission to give extracts from letters addressed to him by Charles Reade; to the Very Reverend Canon Bernard Smith, of Great Marlow; to Mrs. John Maxwell (M. E. Braddon) for her affectionate reminiscences of the author; and to members of his family, both for antiquarian details and also particularly for information relating to the boyhood and young manhood of Charles Reade.

ORSETT HALL, *February 1, 1887.*

C. L. R.

C. R.

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A MEMOIR
OF
CHARLES READE, D.C.L.,

DRAMATIST, NOVELIST, ESSAYIST.

INTRODUCTION.

BIOGRAPHERS for the most part begin with an account of the ancestry and parentage of him whose life they reproduce. For many reasons we should have preferred to vary this rule. To have done so, however, would have been to obliterate much of the special interest which environed the old home and family circle whereof Charles Reade was for more than half his lifetime the central point. We will so far apologize, nevertheless, for the intrusion of genealogical matter, by relegating it to an introductory chapter, to be read or passed over according to individual preference. In the one brief autobiographical sketch which exists among his very copious literary remains, we find that he devoted about a tenth part of its entirety to his pedigree ; it would appear, therefore, that had he followed the example of Mr. Trollope, and bequeathed a compendious narrative of himself, he would have endeavored not only to tell who his progenitors were,

but also to show that they were not purchased commodities. He has himself given us our cue.

The author, moreover, upon whose individuality we here attempt to throw such light as may be afforded by our own personal knowledge, that of others, and by excerpts from his MSS., was never among the number of those who affect to despise heredity. He expended time and labor in verifying the ancient family records. No man believed more firmly in himself, none also was more ready to acknowledge indebtedness to his progenitors. When complimented on his sledge-hammer letters to the *Daily Telegraph*, he parried this eulogium with, "A piece of good-fortune befell us in the last century. My father's grandfather married the daughter of the village blacksmith, and from her we are descended." That was how he accounted for the hammer of Thor his right hand wielded. It may, perchance, have been from the said blacksmith that he inherited the surpassing force which seemed to give him the mastery over all antagonism. He owed his imagination, however, his susceptibility, his sympathy with beauty, his dramatic instinct, to other and less coarsened sources. With the muscular texture of the rude smith were interwoven fibres of the Court and the Camp, the Senate and the Study. He regarded himself—and rightly—as apart from class, yet would have turned in hot fury upon him who dared to impugn his gentle blood ; indeed, his almost romantic reverence for his ancestors extended beyond them, to their acreage and mansions. More than once in his literary remains we find a mournful reference to the loss of Bocket—entailed in strict succession on his own branch of the family—so much so as almost to suggest that he may at one time, when Fortune was at her zenith, have indulged a secret ambition of repurchasing that beautiful demesne.

We commence, therefore, his biography with a brief analysis of those human threads whereof his nature was composed. Pedigrees, by those who do not happen to possess them, are commonly supposed to be shoddy inventions designed to bolster up a factitious pride. Happily, in the case of Charles Reade, his ancestry on either side for about four centuries is capable of exact verification, and we have at once relieved ourselves from the charge of snobbishness by putting boldly to the front its one plebeian element. We shall further tell the whole story without coloring or gloss. It is one which seems to confirm the doctrine of heredity by reflecting as in a mirror both his faults and his virtues.

He was the youngest child of John Reade, lord of the manors of Ipsden Huntercombe and Ipsden Bassett, and of half the manor of Cheekenden in the county of Oxford, by Anna Maria, eldest daughter of Major John Scott-Waring, M.P. for the old borough of Stockbridge, Hants.* It was his constant boast through life that he was *par excellence* his mother's son, a Scott-Waring rather than a Reade. This was an injustice in more senses than one to his sire, to whom he stood indebted for whatever of good looks, stature, and humor he possessed. However, inasmuch as his mother's brain was in many ways the replica of his own, we will first, in brief, trace the threads of her genealogy.

Her name was Scott, Waring being added by her father subsequently to her marriage with John Reade. We have therefore to deal with the Scotts of Betton, in the county of Shropshire.

In the reign of Henry VII. (whose Chief-Justice and

* Disfranchised by Earl Grey's Reform Bill of 1832.

adviser, by the way, was Sir Robert Rede) there occurred a herald's visitation in and about the Welsh Marches, and the reigning Scott of Betton was required to produce his pedigree. He did so, alleging his direct descent from Balliol le Scot of Scot's Hall in Kent, son of John Balliol, *non voluntate hominum* King of Scotland. The heralds found fault with Mr. Scott's pedigree, but gave him time to prove it. The verdict subsequently went against the Shropshire gentleman by default, but it must not hastily be assumed that the plea was erroneous. It is a far cry from Shrewsbury to Maidstone, and no doubt in the middle ages proofs of pedigree depended largely for their registration on the ability of the heritor to disburse largess to the heralds. Be that as it may, it has been a steady tradition with the Scotts that their real name is Balliol, and if that be true, then Charles Reade could claim consanguinity with the royal house of Scotland.

In the pedigree of the Scotts after Henry VII.'s reign we find but few names of note. A Scott in the last century married a Miss Sandford of the Isle, a family of remote antiquity, boasting descent from Charlemagne, and Charles Reade's great-grandfather Scott wedded a Miss Waring of Ince. This, as it proved, was a great match, for Miss Waring's son, Mrs. Reade's father, eventually inherited the entirety of the Waring estates, which when capitalized gave a grand total of a quarter of a million sterling ; and had they been preserved, inasmuch as Ince is now yielding coal abundantly, would have produced at least half that amount per annum in rents and royalties. That, however, was not to be. John Scott went to India as a mere lad in the service of the Company. He rose to be Major, and became the military secretary and friend of Warren Hastings, then Governor-General. He has been termed Has-

tings's evil genius. The statement should be inverted; but of that anon.

While yet a subaltern in the Madras army young Scott met a Scotch girl, who, if an ivory miniature is to be trusted, must have been supremely lovely. Miss Blackrie was the only daughter of the Surgeon-General of India, who in his youth had fought as an officer in the army of bonnie Prince Charlie; but when the romance of rebellion collapsed at Culloden, exchanged the service of Mars for that of Esculapius, and was holding a position of profit in consequence. By this lady Major John Scott had two daughters, Mrs. Reade and Mrs. Faber; and two sons, Edward, the elder, who subsequently became a distinguished Bengal Civil servant, and Charles, who died young. He resigned his appointment upon hearing of the virulent attacks made upon his chief by Sir Philip Francis, and entered Parliament, burning with zeal to confute the slanders which Sir Philip's rancorous hatred had invented and spread broadcast against his friend.

Lord Macaulay, with his usual inaccuracy, affirms in his essay that Scott was in the pay of Hastings. Major Scott, on his father's death, inherited property in Shropshire; his wife's fortune was about twenty thousand pounds, and he had saved money in India. When he left India Mr. Hastings was his debtor, and continued so for many years. The accusation that he was paid for the services he rendered to his friend with such cordial enthusiasm was false, and all the more ludicrous because, at the moment when he was accused of plundering Warren Hastings, he had inherited the vast estates of Mr. Waring, and was the wealthier man of the two. Charles Reade's mother, who was passionately fond of her father, wrote a calm letter to the Whig historian, informing him of the facts, which

letter was never acknowledged, while the misstatement in the first remained uncorrected in the subsequent editions. Moreover, Macaulay gibbets the voluble Major for calling Burke a reptile, but omits to state that this amenity was evoked by Burke having previously styled him a jackal. Major John Scott-Waring has sins to answer for, but he was lavishly generous, a man of honor, and one of the readiest debaters in a brilliant House of Commons.

The Major's social life was, in some respects, more important than his political. He was an intimate friend of the Prince Regent and his Royal brothers, none the less so, perhaps, because his second and third wives chanced to be members of the dramatic profession. The advocates of heredity might assuredly find a strong confirmation of their doctrine in the circumstance of grandfather and grandson being equally stage-struck. Not without sufficient cause did Charles Reade boast his close affinity with the Scott-Warings.

It was in a cultured atmosphere, therefore, that Charles Reade's mother passed her girlhood. She knew every one. The Princes and Princesses, Mr. Pitt, Sir Jonah Barrington, Charles and Robert Grant, Grattan and Sheridan, the former of whom dubbed her "My pretty Puritan." She was a constant *habituée* of the Ladies' Gallery in the House of Commons. "Mr. Burke," she was wont to declare in after-years, "would not now be listened to. His brogue was absurd. He persisted in calling the Begum, the 'Baygum,' though every one even then laughed." Her anecdotes of the Pitt and Regency period were most racy, and she took so keen an interest in the Hastings trial as to have passed not merely hours, but days, in court.

Being on a visit at the country-seat, in Oxfordshire, of

Lord Charles Spenser, she accompanied her host and hostess to the Assize ball, and danced with a young gentleman commoner of Oriel the whole evening. The acquaintance thus formed ripened into intimacy, and ended in her marriage with Mr. Reade, and her settling down at Ipsden House as its *châtelaine*, celebrating her golden wedding there, and beneath its eaves giving birth to her son Charles.

On the mother's side, therefore, Charles Reade inherited his dramatic instinct, and withal a vein of good, honest Puritanism. But if he was the son *par excellence* of Grattan's pretty Puritan, he was also the grandson of Prince Florizel's *convive* and boon companion, and, be it added, the grandson of the braw young Highlander who did battle for bonnie Prince Charlie—a gentleman, whose portrait, by-the-bye, suggests the student rather than the hero; but then it was painted in the days of his Surgeon-Generalship, after he had, doubtless, schooled his features into an expression resembling that of Lord Chancellor Thurlow.

From the fine old English gentleman his sire Charles Reade inherited qualities of a very different character. The Squire was a Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*, and as he was, so also for the most part were the men whose name he had inherited. Among the gentlemen of Oxon, Berks, Bucks, Herts, and Gloucester, none could adduce a braver record of loyalty to Church and State than the race styled indifferently Le Rede, Rede, Reade, and—this only in the solitary instance of a fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, who dropped the final 'e'—Read, albeit General Meredith Read, who represents the American branch of the family, has also elided the characteristic letter.

In the year 1460, William of Waynflete, being about to build Magdalen College, Oxford, received from a neigh-

boring land-owner the substantial offer of stone from his quarry of Taynton on the borders of Oxon and Gloucestershire. In the deeds of the last century this estate of Taynton, subtending the superb Royal Forest of Wyche-wood, is styled "the ancient inheritance," and it remained in the possession of the family till 1868, when it was willed away by the late Sir John Chandos Reade to his servant, Joseph Wakefield. The donor of stone from the Taynton quarry to Waynflete was Sir Edmund Rede, who is styled Baron of Boarstal, and was himself both an ardent churchman and a lover of architecture. He rebuilt a large portion of Dorchester Abbey, the noblest of Oxfordshire churches, and Boarstal Tower, at the foot of Brill Hill, remains as a monument of his taste. The tower was probably erected by the same guild or company of masons that erected Magdalen College. There must have been an Italian among them, or else, as is probable, Sir Edmund himself had crossed the seas, for though the outline of the tower is late perpendicular, the detail is renaissance. Sir Edmund's uncle was Bishop of Chichester, and his father a benefactor to the Abbey of St. Albans. Whether he ever sat in the House of Lords as Baron of Boarstal is dubious, but that indisputably was his style, and the Fellows of Magdalen, up to the date of the Reformation, said masses for the repose of his soul. So far as we can gain a glimpse of his character through the long vista of ages, this first benefactor of Magdalen College seems to have been a zealot, large of heart and chivalrous withal. He lived a celibate life, and was succeeded by his nephew, Sir Robert Le Rede, who resided at Beedon in Berks, and was in the same year Sheriff of Oxon, Bucks, and Berks. Sir Robert le Rede was succeeded by his son William, who married into the family

of Beaumont of Cole Orton, the direct descendants of King Henry III. His successor, Thomas Rede, married the daughter of Sir William Hoo of the Hoo in Herts, whose son was the uncle of Queen Anne Boleyn, and created Baron Hoo and Hastings. But the most illustrious of the name was Sir Robert Rede, founder of the Rede lecture in the University of Cambridge, Chief-Justice of the Common Pleas, Executor of the will of Henry VII., and one of the guardians of King Henry VIII. during his minority. Sir Robert obtained a fresh grant of arms, which have been borne ever since by the family, and are quite distinct from the coat of the Barons of Boarstal. It was at one time attributed erroneously to his influence that on the dissolution of the monasteries, the Barton estate at Abingdon, consisting of the palatial abbot's residence and pleasaunce, came into the possession of William Rede of Beedon, the purchaser, in 1539, of the Manors of Ipsden Huntercombe and Ipsden Bassett. As a matter of fact, the Barton estate was acquired by purchase. Ipsden became the dower of his granddaughter Catherine, who married a Mr. Vachell. The inventory of their furniture is still preserved at Ipsden; but, unluckily, the bridegroom being a Popish recusant, two thirds of the rental of Ipsden during his lifetime were forfeited to the Crown. Mrs. Vachell died childless, and Ipsden at her death was inherited by her nephew, Sir Thomas Reade.

Sir Thomas succeeded his father at Barton Court, as the Abbatial Palace was renamed, and married the only daughter of a Spanish Adventurer, Sir John Bocket, of Bocket Hall, Hatfield, son-in-law of Sir John Lytton of Knebworth. Barton being the appanage of the elder son, the second son, John, obtained his mother's estate, and as the owner of Bocket was created a Baronet in

1625, which honor expired with his grandson, who, as the monument in Hatfield Church tells us, died while on his travels abroad, at the early age of twenty-two, unmarried,* and at his death Brocket Hall passed to his sisters as co-heiresses.

Sir Thomas Reade's elder son married a daughter of Sir Gilbert Cornwall, Baron of Burford, in Shropshire, the direct lineal descendant — with the bar sinister — of King John. This lady's sister had wedded Speaker Lenthall, a fortunate circumstance for at least one Reade, as events proved, for the times were troublous, and, true to their traditions, the junior members of the family were ardent Church and State men. They had given to the former, for old Sir Thomas, following the example of Sir Edmund of Boarstal, had built an aisle in St. Helen's Church, Abingdon, and had benefited by the latter. Hence, when, later on, the civil war broke out, none were more devoted to the losing cause.

Compton Reade stands out in the history of the family at this epoch in bold relief. He was the eldest son and heir to Barton and Beedon, with the ancient estate at Taynton, while his next brother, Edward, was heir of Ipsden, and heir presumptive of Brocket Hall. At the age of nineteen this fine young cavalier raised a regiment of horse for the King, which formed a contingent of the splendid cavalry of Prince Rupert. There is a record in the Bodleian Library of his personal encounter with Colonel Barrett of the Parliamentary forces. He was not only present at the earlier battles of the campaign, but also at the siege of Worcester, after which crowning

* The tradition is that he formed one of the suite of the Pretender. He died in Rome of small-pox.

mercy to the Parliamentarians, although the Royal Standard was down, he defended Barton Court against the guns of Fairfax till it was—as Dr. Plot puts it—burned over his head. Years ago they used to show a cannon-ball embedded in the gray masonry of the ruins of this noble pile ; but Barton Court and the heroism of its young master have long been forgotten.

Thanks to the influence of Speaker Lenthall, Compton's life was spared, as also that of his younger brother Edward, who had been his lieutenant. Doubtless they had a bad time of it during the Commonwealth; but at the Restoration, Compton was rewarded with a baronetcy and a grant of money by Parliament as a *solatium* for the loss of Barton. At the request of the King, he invested this lump sum in the purchase of the Royal residence of Shipton Court, near Wychwood Forest, and adjoining his lands at Taynton. To reveal an ugly secret—the “Merrie Monarch” had bestowed Shipton on one of the ladies of his Court, and this personage preferred ready money to a gabled residence with the privilege of shooting bucks. It was very much what we should call a job, but Compton got a new home and the lady her money, all at the expense of the British taxpayer, so everybody was pleased all round.

Young Edward, however, did not fare so well. He, poor fellow, was not an eldest son, but had borne the risks of loyalty, and, worse still, had mortgaged Ipsden up to the hilt. The old house where Catherine Vachell had lived was tumbling to pieces for lack of repair ; and instead of being granted largess by a complaisant Parliament, he found himself under lock and key in Oxford Castle for debt. There exists some very strange correspondence anent this ill-starred cavalier, who, by-the-bye

malgre his reverses, contrived to marry four wives. One letter is from his detaining creditor, addressing him as Right Worshipful Sir, and politely hoping that his health does not suffer from his incarceration. Another is from the old cavalier himself to one of his wives, petulantly grumbling because she had neglected to forward his leather-breeches. A third is from his eldest son—another Compton, who was fellow of St. John's, expressing a hope that number four might be a lass with a little money. Edward lived to a green old age in spite of his misfortunes, leaving his eldest surviving son his estate. His younger son, Philip Edward, was a poet, whose erotic verses have unfortunately been lost, and also much given to experiments in metallurgy, at a place called Braziers, hard by Ipsden, with the design of discovering the philosopher's stone.

Philip, Edward's nephew, however, who shortly after, at the age of sixteen, inherited Ipsden, made that discovery, though not through the medium of metals. Entering, when he attained his majority, on a mortgaged estate, with a ruinous mansion, and little of any value except the fine stock-timber in the park, he registered a resolve to retrieve the fortunes of his branch of the family by industry and thrift. His property ran for four miles in an unbroken line, three fourths being grass and corn land, and one fourth wood. At that time—it was the commencement of the last century—wheat was gold, and the soil of Ipsden produced magnificent cereals. In order to obtain capital, he felled all the timber in his park, pulled down the mansion, erected new farm buildings, broke up the grass, and began farming on a large scale. His books remain to show how, little by little, he paid off first one mortgage, then another, then cleared the estate, then enlarged what had been

the ancient manor-house before his ancestor had built a mansion for Catherine Vachell, and finally added three farms to his acreage. His portrait represents a man who could drive a hard bargain; possibly he did sometimes, but he could boast with truth that he had found out the real philosopher's stone.

He could not, however, have been altogether hard-natured, for there remains a pane of glass whereon he had cut with a diamond "Bridget Brigham has no faults." That was in his early youth. He married the same faultless Bridget, who was the daughter of the Squire of Cane End, and years after, when she lay under the sod in Ipsden churchyard, mysteriously disappeared one fine day; so also did Martha Bartholomew, the daughter of the village blacksmith, whose sister subsequently married Mr. Thomas, the Vicar of Ipsden; and when Squire John returned, Martha was by his side as Mrs. Reade. Wonderfully lovely, so the tale goes, was the bride, as also her sister. Anyhow, the Squire thought so, and in the days of his prosperity too. She bore him children, but did not outlast her beauty. They went in state with four horses and the family coach to visit his cousin, Sir John, at Ship-ton Court, and she died during her visit. The Squire did not long survive her, and at his decease Ipsden went to his grandson, then a child of two years old.

We have already adverted to the story of this same child, Charles Reade's father. He was educated at Rugby and Oriel, was during part of his life master of his own harriers, and though pressed to enter Parliament as the friend of such men as Lord Charles Spencer, Vansittart, afterwards Lord Bexley, Lord Chancellor Thurlow, and Warren Hastings, steadily refused to abandon his country life and field sports. But, if he lost a splendid chance, no

man was a wiser or a kindlier father. His seven sons worshipped him for his noble bearing, his manliness, conscientiousness, and ready wit. Ipsden House, though the least pretentious of residences, attracted men of station, men of letters, and the best minds of the university. Among the guests whose names recur to memory haphazard among the visitors there, may be enumerated—besides Warren Hastings and Lord Thurlow—George Grote, Frederick Faber, Wilberforce and his sons Robert, Samuel, and Henry, Lord Lytton, Bishops Barrington, Hampden, Charles Baring, Jacobson, the two Sumners, Doctors Macbride, Plumptre, Ellerton, Cadogan, and Kennicot. The *genius loci* was both clerical and literary. The Squire never forgot his scholarship; and his wife, besides being the most brilliant of conversationalists, read every book that came out. Whatever Ipsden House was, it could not be charged with bucolic dullness. Charles Reade was born into a refined family circle, for his mother had the *bel air* of the Court, and his father was a gentleman of the old school.

We have thus roughly enumerated the leading threads which went to form the individuality of the dramatist and novelist. On his father's side he boasted the blood of the Beaumonts, descended from King Henry III., and of the Cornewalls, through a morganatic marriage from the King of the Romans, son of King John. His direct ancestors had been Catholics and High Churchmen; his parents were Low Church people. The race had produced a lawyer of eminence, besides courtiers and cavaliers. With them he mingled the blood of Brocket the adventurer and Bartholomew the smith, while he combined the idiosyncrasies of Edward Reade the spendthrift, and old John Reade, the self-help man, who saved the Ipsden Reads from ruin.

On his mother's side he may possibly have inherited a strain of the old Balliol blood; but the Scotts, being dwellers on the Welsh Marches, must have been more or less Cambrian, and Mrs. John Reade's mother was a Highland lassie. There were points of resemblance, undoubtedly, between the author of "Griffith Gaunt" and "A Terrible Temptation" and his grandsire, the Epicurean major; but the grandson was immeasurably his maternal grandfather's superior.

Being, as we have seen, a blende of inequalities—of Blue and Red blood, of the Farm and of the Court, of Catholic and Calvinist, of Epicure and Ascetic, of Spendthrift and Miser, of Adventurer and Stay-at-home, of fighting Cavalier and homely Artisan, Charles Reade was, perhaps necessarily, a mass of contradictions. Assuming, for argument's sake, that the attributes of these various ancestors with special intensity concentrated in his person, so complex an amalgam could hardly be commonplace; nevertheless, with all his eccentricity, he never descended below his own level, which, as he would have told you, was that of a man of ancestry, though, owing to the accident of being *natu junior*, not also of acres. Whether genius, or, as Trollope sneered, only "almost a genius," he lived, as he was born, a gentleman, and died a Christian. To his country he gave the product of a brilliant and independent brain, and he rescued an old name from obscurity. We all owe him a debt, we of the English-speaking races, but especially those of his own kith and kin, for if a man in his faults, he was more than a man in his virtues.

"In memoriâ eternâ erunt justi.

Ab auditione malâ non timebunt."

CHAPTER I.

CHARLES READE'S MOTHER.

THE Gracchi, who were the moral politicians of Republican Rome, the Wesleys, the moral religionists of monarchic England, both owed their superiority to the formative influence of their mothers. And these phenomenal mothers were pre-eminently human creatures of flesh and blood, brain and force, as well as of sweetness and light. They were not nuns; they were not hysterical; nevertheless, they were much the reverse of commonplace, while their ambitions soared aloft, and were all the nobler because of being not for themselves, but for their offspring. They desired to see their sons both great and good; not great only, but great and good; not good only, but above their fellows in intellectual capacity. They have their reward. History speaks of no women in terms of such reverence. You must obliterate the records of the past before you can abrogate their fame; indeed, whatever Rome owed to the Gracchi she owed to the Spartan virtues of the woman who gave them birth; and our national debt to the Wesleys, the magnitude of which we hardly as yet can realize, may be carried back to the homely parson's wife who trained them to be truthful and God-fearing, temperate and brave.

Like them, the mother of Charles Reade was no common woman. Born under the torrid sun of Madras, immersed while yet a girl in the life of politics, society, and

the Court, she was before all things a lady. Haydn taught her music, and Sheridan epigram and repartee. Her manner was perfect, and her conversational powers so extraordinary as to have fascinated so superior a master of rhetoric as Samuel Wilberforce. There never was a more omnivorous devourer of books; yet though she read incessantly during her span of ninety years, she never varied by one iota the strong opinions formed in early life, opinions wherewith she indoctrinated every one of her eleven children, and that not superficially, but rather as a matter of unalterable conviction. Being, however, essentially a woman of fashion, her religion was tempered by worldliness. "My mother," aphorized her son Charles, "is pre-eminently feminine. She is consistent in her inconsistency."

It was on the eve of the great French Revolution that she was married to John Reade, in the old parish church of Bromley in Kent, and on the same day travelled with her squire to Ipsden, where, *ne cretâ careat pulchra dies notâ*, she planted a larch on the lawn. The quaint old house, which had sufficed for thrifty John Reade, her husband's grandsire, did not at all meet her ideas. It was by no means, to employ her own terminology, "sufficiently genteel." The red-brick and flint-stone dressings offended her eye, accustomed alike to the "bungalows" of the East and to the Georgian architecture of suburban London. Hence her first act was to paint the old house a garish white, and her next to throw out enormous bow-windows of mahogany, whereby the two chief reception-rooms were enlarged, but the house itself was invested with the appearance of a villa. After that she burned several family portraits which were not up to her æsthetic level, exchanged the huge mediæval salt-cellar, which had

been used at audit dinners to the tenants, for a teapot, and settled down to a long reign.

At first Ipsden House was merry enough. Grattan had styled her "My pretty Puritan," but there was not much of the latter quality conspicuous either in her or her squire, whose indiscipline had not been largely appreciated by the fellows of his college. All his old friends of Oriel and Christ Church came in shoals to visit their whilom companion and his bride. There was at that time a pack of harriers in the kennels, and four English miles of shooting, over and above the attraction of a lady who knew everybody about town. So the game progressed right merrily, and had it continued, though she brought her husband some fortune, the chances are that the Ipsden estate would have again required nursing. A change, however, came over the spirit of their dream.

There had been at Oriel with young Squire John a scholar of the name of Fry. This gentleman's brains and heart were vastly superior to his manner and appearance. In college he had been anathema to a set numbering among others the late Lords Devon and Charles Spencer, Brummel, Stackhouse, and Pendarves; as a matter of fact, the Squire dubbed him "a vulgar fellow," whose gray stockings were a cause of offence, and whose clay pipe one of absolute abomination. It chanced, however, that the Vicar of Ipsden, a divine much given to partridge-shooting, who conducted a funeral in sporting garb, plus of course the necessary surplice, fell sick, and Mr. Fry came as his Locum Tenens. "You must ask the gentleman to dinner," said Mrs. Reade. "I really can't," pleaded the Squire. However, though the good man was not invited to the festive board, both John Reade and his young wife paid him the compliment of occupying the family pew

on Sunday, and they who came to scoff remained to pray.

The plain, vulgar, ungainly scholar, in a word, had developed into a mighty preacher. He had caught the fervor of the original Methodists, and his rhetoric, if delivered with a provincial accent, was of the type that strikes hard and strikes home. After church the Squire turned to his wife and said, "I wish I had asked Fry to dinner. I'll ask him now." And so he did, with a courteous apology for his previous *laches*, and the scholar with the gray stockings pocketed the affront, walked back with them to the house, nearly a mile, and metamorphosed both. The Squire dropped his Oriel friends,* family prayers became

* One of his old Oxford set never relaxed his intimacy with the Squire. This was Henry Peckwell, student of Christ Church, who afterwards assumed the name of Blosset, and as Sir Henry Blosset was Chief-Justice of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, and uncle of George Grote, the historian. This gentleman rode over to Ipsden to learn that Squire John had an heir, and, returning to his college rooms, indited the following stanzas:

"Through Dorchester, as journeying late,
I passed the churchyard's ancient gate,
And mused in pensive mood,
Immortal sounds I seemed to meet;
Trembling I stopp'd, when at my feet
A meagre phantom stood.

" 'Three hundred years,' it cried, 'and more,
My body near yon aged tower
Has slept in sacred peace.
I dwell in Heaven, in glory there
I watch, and with a father's care
Protect my manly race.

"As each new heir his breath receives,
Those peaceful realms my spirit leaves,
His future state to learn.

an institution at Ipsden, everything mundane was sent to the right-about, bar the harriers—to have dispersed the pack would have been too severe a sacrifice for Mr. John Reade—and Mr. Fry was constituted father confessor. He brought over from Lincoln College his bosom friend, George Stanley Faber, a Yorkshireman with an incomprehensible dialect, but a magnificent brain, which latter divine married Mrs. Reade's sister, and for nearly sixty years subsequently kept up a continuous correspondence with Ipsden, mostly on the subject of prophecy, for he was the Cumming of the period, and certainly justified his reputation by foretelling the Second Empire, almost before the first had attained its zenith. As a matter of fact, of the two divines who influenced so largely both the Squire of Ipsden and his wife, Faber was by far the more intellectual and presentable. Both of them were Doric, but the one was cultured; whereas the other, known afterwards as Fry of Bath, though a splendid preacher and fine Hebrew scholar, never attained to the semblance of a gentleman. In his old age a long pipe and spittoon were his inseparable companions, but withal he was a good man and a good Christian.

The conversion of Mrs. Reade to the tenets of high Cal-

To Ipsden journeying now, for there
My first delight, my tenderest care,
A lovely babe is born."

Sir Henry, of course, refers to Sir Edmund Rede, the rebuilder of Dorchester Abbey, whose remains rest under its shadow. But the doctrine of the good Chief-Justice, even for 1797, when nobody was suspected of Romanism, must have staggered the theological mother of the said lovely babe. According to Sir Henry, the successive heirs to Ipsden and Shipton were placed under the patronage of saintly Sir Edmund: This indeed was rank Papistry.

vinism affected the entire atmosphere of Ipsden for more than half a century. If the Vicar was a Gallio, the village became one of the most religious in the county.* No

* Influenced by Mr. Fry's teaching, the Squire, to whom all the cottages in the village of Ipsden belonged, invited his humble tenants to come up to the House on Sundays when there was no service in the church and read with him; or, if *they* could not read, hear him read, and explain one or two chapters in the Bible for their mutual edification. Mr. Wright, the then Incumbent of Ipsden, gave only one service on Sunday, and sometimes that one was pretermitted. His sermon, accurately timed to ten minutes, was (unlike his example) moral, but often incomprehensible to his humble hearers, and there his active clerical life ceased; comforting the afflicted, visiting the sick and dying, appeared to form no part, in his opinion, of a clergyman's duty. Mrs. Reade might fulfil it if she thought fit—he offered no objection; but when it came to a layman reading the Bible to other laymen his wrath kindled, and he incontinently addressed a vehement letter to the Bishop of Oxford, urging his lordship at once to proceed against the Squire for holding a Conventicle in his house contrary to law. The bishop wrote a kind letter to Mr. Reade, reminding him, as an active magistrate, that the law prohibited the assembling together under a roof of more than twenty persons, either for religious or political objects. The Squire replied, explaining what the real facts were, and that the number of the cottagers who met together had never exceeded twelve. The bishop's reply was, nevertheless, looked for with some anxiety. After a few days it came, the family being seated at breakfast at the time. Mr. Reade read the letter in silence, and with a grave face. Mrs. Reade, who was on tenter-hooks, at last could contain herself no longer. "My dear John," she exclaimed, "what does the bishop say?" "Well, my dear," her husband quietly replied, "in substance, that Reade is right and Wright is wrong." In fact, the bishop warmly approved of the course Mr. Reade had pursued, and urged him to continue it. Thus fortified, a Sunday-school, nearly, if not quite, the first in Oxfordshire, was established and supported by the Squire at his sole expense. Later on he built a school-house for day as well as Sunday scholars, the mistress who presided being styled the Dame; and in that school Mrs. Reade, her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren have taught successive generations of the Ipsden poor for upwards of eighty years.

public-house offered a counter-attraction to the Bible, and the boys and girls who with rapid succession put in an appearance at Ipsden House between the years 1797 and 1814 acquired a belief which never deserted them. It is but just to add that no mother ever labored with more unremitting exertion to make her children capable. She would have had every one distinguished, for the mediocrity which satisfied her really clever but totally unambitious husband, to her was most abhorrent. Not once nor twice was John Reade urged by her to enter on a Parliamentary career, for which he was personally fitted, being gifted with a noble presence and a fluent tongue, while his interest in an age when interest carried everything was overpowering. The dogs and the woods satisfied the born country gentleman, and his wife, therefore, centred all her hopes in her sons. Earnestly, almost oppressively, she sought to fire them with her vaulting ambition to be first among the first. The names of John Thurlow Reade and of Edward Anderdon Reade live still in the memory of the dark-skinned inhabitants of the northwest provinces of India; but of all her sons the name of Charles Reade alone has gained a world-wide renown.

The routine of Ipsden House resembled clock-work. Prayers at 8 A.M. in the drawing-room, when the servants introduced a deal form for themselves, the housekeeper and butler, as became those in authority, being permitted the luxury of a chair. The Squire was his own chaplain, and one rule he enforced rigorously and dogmatically, viz., that on no account, and at no hour of the day, should any book, sacred or secular, be laid on the top of the Bible. The method of elocution adopted at these diurnal domestic functions would be styled nowadays histrionic, if not melodramatic. Enough that it was sincere.

Prayers over, all promptly adjourned to the breakfast-room, where breakfast followed in due course. The Ipsden hot-rolls were subsequently introduced at Cuddesden Palace, Bishop Wilberforce, from his earlier recollections of Ipsden, having begged for the receipt. One can but wish that these simple luxuries of the past had not shared the fate of the species dodo, for they are now but memories. Luncheon was punctually at one, dinner at half-past five, tea about eight; then chess and music till ten, when family vespers ended the day. Of course everybody was dressed for dinner—the ladies with bare necks and arms, the gentlemen in blue coats with brass buttons. This arrangement was *de rigueur* even when the house was comparatively empty, a social condition of infrequent occurrence, guests, as a rule, succeeding each other by relays. Everybody ate much and drank little, the wines being madeira and port, except the late Sir John Chandos Reade, who, as head of the family, was privileged to invert the process. Beer was an almost unknown beverage, the entire family preferring wine, with the solitary exception of Charles, who was a stern water-drinker until quite late in life.

Environed by this Arcadian, indeed primeval simplicity, Mrs. Reade lived and did her work in the world industriously and happily. She was at once domestic and social, with an aptitude for cultivating the great of the earth, more particularly when they were of her own cult. Lord Thurlow was godfather to her eldest son; Barrington, the Prince-Bishop of Durham, who resided at Mongewell Park, three miles off, became sponsor for her fourth; and Warren Hastings for her youngest daughter. "My dearest Lady Effingham" was the friend of her lifetime, until that lady in her eighth decade ran away with a

scripture-reader, when the note changed, and she was styled "That horrid old woman." On her, however, and others of the same type she wasted reams of paper and gallons of ink, the major part of the forenoon being devoted to correspondence. It is, perhaps, superfluous to hint that a lady gifted with such exceptional mental qualities, though a devoted mother, was by no means ambitious of being bored by her children—indeed, she sent the sons off to school as early as possible, and after that to India. Her influence with the Board of Directors of the Old East India Company was virtually paramount. She obtained no less than three writerships, *i. e.*, appointments in the Civil Service, together with two cavalry cadetships for her sons, and an infantry cadetship for a connection by marriage. Five out of seven boys were thus expeditiously launched to sink or swim; and as regards the daughters, the two elder were wedded to men of her choice, while one remained single, to be the companion of her fourteen years of widowhood.

Although, therefore, this woman of idiosyncrasies consigned her five first-born sons to the India where she was born, and where her father had attained a certain eminence, her youngest seemed from his cradle to have a singular attraction for her. Charles was her pet. When her other children came from school or college she loved them for a day, tolerated them for a week, and then devoutly wished they were out of the house. Charles, however, was ever welcome, missed when absent, and adored when present. For his mother was as warm-hearted as capricious, and it may be that her quick perception detected in him the evidences of consummate brain-power, the quality she coveted for all. Yet she had not one stupid child—indeed, her whole family was distinctly tal-

ented. Her two elder sons shone at Rugby and Haileybury, her third at Charterhouse. Her fourth, the father of Winwood, the African explorer, was a brilliant *raconteur*; her fifth became acting Lieutenant-Governor of the northwest provinces, during the mutiny, and not only saved Agra, but, better still, Havelock from collapse, by supplying him at a critical moment with funds. It was the fortune of her sixth to be engaged in several leading cases with no small *éclat*, and Charles was himself the last but not least; while of her daughters, Julia, the wife of the martyr, Captain Allen Gardiner, R.N., has left a memory alike sweet and fragrant. She was as handsome as her father, and as brilliant as her mother. Nearly forty years after this lady's decease a nephew of hers was greeted by an ardent Romanist with, "What, are you a nephew of Julia Reade?" as though the fact alone spoke volumes; the speaker adding, "For grace, for beauty, and for brains, I have never known any woman to be her equal." Nor was that the language of exaggeration. It was not, therefore, because her other children were dullards or behemoths that Mrs. Reade concentrated her maternal affection on Charles. There was a bond of brain between mother and son, and withal a decided similarity of disposition. He entertained from first to last a firm belief in the majesty of his mother's mental powers, and loved her, we may be sure, none the less for being in every fibre a lady. It was to her that he was indebted for those habits of untiring industry which, even when he appeared to be a man of leisure, redeemed his hours of seeming idleness from inanity, and afterwards converted his luxurious residence at Albert Gate into a workshop. His mother's brain was never passive. The secret of her social success lay in the fact of her having so much to

say on every conceivable topic. She had read, she had thought, she had discussed the problems of the day, its literature, its theology and politics, within and without the family circle, and her mind rapidly crystallized ideas. Bishops and learned doctors listened to her with genuine admiration, for to the charm of originality she added that of research. She was a firm believer in woman's wit; her earnestness was so intense that she could hardly tolerate badinage, or fun of any sort. At dinner she would seem almost surprised at the effect produced by her husband's sparkling sallies, and was once heard to whisper an irate aside, that he was getting to be a very frivolous old man. To her everything was so overwhelmingly serious, that although a smile never left her features—except on very rare occasions—she had no time for laughter, still less for fooling. There was nothing little about her, and to her littleness was tantamount to vulgarity. To say that she impressed all with whom she came in contact is to render her but scant justice, for she attracted most especially the highest minds, such as George Grote, Samuel Wilberforce, G. S. Faber, and his splendid nephew, founder of the Brompton Oratory and poet. That, however, was not all; her servants held her in the highest estimation. To the poor people on the Ipsden estate she played the part of Lady Bountiful, feeding them royally, and physicking their vitals experimentally. This spirit of charity she certainly transmitted to her son Charles, together, unluckily, with her faculty for being very easily humbugged. That her sons were keenly appreciative of the worth of this mother of theirs may be inferred from the simple fact of one among their number having jotted down, during a period of forty years, several hundred of her wisest aphorisms. It would obviously be impossible to give

more than a sample of her epigrammatic tongue and pen. Suffice it that the following were unpremeditated, uttered in the course of common conversation, or scribbled *currente calamo*, but rescued from oblivion by the affection of a son who treasured his mother's wit as sacred. She shall speak for herself in the excerpts culled from a small MS. volume in her son's handwriting, almost at random:

"Life teems with contrarieties, and the wise man seeks rather to discipline his mind than to alter his circumstances."

"Mr. Hastings is surprisingly well and young. At eighty skipping like a fawn, and not old-looking. But at eighty I prefer age."

"How difficult it is for a mother to win the love of her sons when she has to fight against their inclinations! But in this, as in other cases, the line of duty is the line for me to take."

"Oh, for bark and steel for the mind, instead of sentiment and spermaceti!"

"I left my Charles in his solitude of College with an aching heart. It is my children that glue me to life."

"I do not much fancy Daniel Wilson as Bishop (of Calcutta). He is a child of God, but barely a gentleman in manners."

"I am better for advice, but in our grand climacteric we must expect the pins to loosen."

"There are some persons whose detestation of you is desirable. Their praise would be censure."

"Female authors are springing up like mushrooms. I begin to think tapestry was a wise employment."

"My friend Samuel Wilberforce will be a bishop. He eschews the doctrine and disloyalty of Newman, but

seems inclined to shut up the Kingdom of Heaven from all but Episcopalians."

"Love makes sad havoc with some people, but will not hurt those who can change easily from fair to brown."

"The wisest man is he who never anticipates, but is daily thankful for the good he enjoys."

"A bouncing girl with the mind of a sparrow, and a beauty with all her wit in her heels, is heaviness to me."

"My early education, early tastes, early friends make me utterly at issue with all vulgarity and imitative gentility."

"Commonplace people are always on the subject of servants or dress, or newspaper information. I had rather be closeted for aye with my own thoughts than have freedom with theirs."

"I have been reading Macaulay's Essays. That on Milton so much admired is execrable in principle, and not redeemed by antithetical eloquence. I like the sparkling, easy style of Horace Walpole, and his terse criticisms better than this new-fangled style of our reviews."

"I have read a few works of fiction. The low wit of Dickens I abominate, but except 'Nicholas Nickleby.' Bulwer I do not read, but James, with his love-ladies, is interesting. And love is not dead, nor imagination either, in your old mother." She was seventy-one.

"One does not wish to see sentiment oozing out at every pore; but there is a bright look and a beaming eye that sets all life within afloat, and *that* pleases. Profession of all sorts is an emetic—but ice chills."

"As to the apostolic succession, drive the nail too hard, and you will rather destroy than build up the Church of England."

"Nothing annoys me so much as the loss of the English language in the literature of the day. There is Carlyle, with his abominable German phraseology—conceited divines, with their Frenchified sentences and compound words that make me throw the book down. What think you of Montgomery ending an octavo volume with 'How?' I like pithy and epigrammatic sentences, a little antithesis also, but only a little."

"To be ever on the stilts is a mistake in these days, when the head is often compelled to take the place of the tail."

"Catechisms make a parrot."

"Haydn gave me his picture on my marriage. On the reverse was Solon's maxim, 'Reckon not on Happiness.'"

"Lady Bathurst said of my father, in the time of the Hastings controversy, 'Here comes Scott, his eyes full of fire and his pockets full of pamphlets.'"

This was *apropos* of her father's daughter, evidently.

To these may be added a sentiment of the canonical variety which reflects the mind of the high Tory, high Calvinist, and high-bred lady. "No one should go beyond his own grounds on Sunday, except to church." Unluckily we have not all of us grounds to go beyond.

This clever lady, as will be noted, was in essence a proverbial philosopher, often unconsciously funny, but always burningly earnest. Paragraphs of hers read like extracts from Charles Reade's earlier novels; *e. g.*, "Living in London," she writes, "what is it? Cliques fashionable, cliques political, cliques religious, and clubs the exceptions." Mixed, however, with so much that was pragmatical and didactic, with much of Jane Austen's ideas about sense, sentiment, and sensibility, and with the consequent glorification of the commonplace, was a current of

tenderness, rarely rising to the surface, perhaps too often obscured. It existed, however, and when in evidence charmed by its simplicity. Thus, after the death of her squire, she wrote, "My children are too old to be loving; I miss the pressure of my dear husband's hand." And during the last week of her life, at the age of ninety, she wrote to her son Edward a farewell, concluding with the really poetic paradox, "THE MOTHER NEVER DIES!"

That is indeed a beautiful truth!

CHAPTER II.

BABYHOOD.

CHARLES READE was born at Ipsden House on the 8th of June, 1814. The youngest of eleven, he entered a home well filled with boys and girls, of whom the elder were almost young men and women. India, however, so soon absorbed the three seniors that he was barely able to recall them, and at a family gathering in his later years openly avowed himself unable to contra-distinguish the portrait of his brother George from that of his brother Henry. His eldest sister, moreover, was shortly after married to an ex-fellow of St. John's, and her union with Mr., afterwards Canon, Woodrooffe virtually took her out of the family. The little Charley, therefore, became from his cradle the especial charge of his sister Julia. Seldom has it fallen to the lot of a child to be blessed with such a nurse, and in after-years he never mentioned her name except with some prefix of endearment. His brothers joined in the general idolatry of the fair-haired, rosy-checked urchin with the large, thoughtful eyes, and a mouth that already showed signs of caprice and wilfulness. Had there been less of wisdom and sound sense blended with such pronounced favoritism, the boy would have developed, even in the nursery, into an *enfant terrible*; but sister Julia was too high-minded to spoil him for the sake of selfish gratification, and his mother had a habit of loving her children with an iron love. She was honey one

moment and vinegar the next ; now indulgent up to a certain limit, and now, as she phrased it, tiring and teasing the children. Charles, doubtless, came in for his full share of her caressing and his half share of her tantalizing, but the latter could not have affected him much. If he was naughty some one else got the blame ; if he gave vent to those momentary ebullitions of temper, which afterwards induced him to style the most eminent of dramatic critics "A criticaster and a shrimp," his amiable sister was sure to be at hand to exorcise the evil spirit by the sheer force of sweetness ; if the young Turk essayed to bully his seniors and got compound interest in return, Julia was ready to ward off the Nemesis his self-assertion had evoked, and pour oil on the troubled waters. He was a spoiled child if ever there was one, and would have been made totally indisciplined but for a fortunate accident.

The nurseries in Ipsden House were situate on the first floor of the old wing, that portion of the mansion whose date is uncertain, but is believed to antedate 1536. Three rooms and a passage were shut off from the rest of the house by a swing door, and it may be supposed that, having been devoted to the use of young children from 1797, when John Thurlow, the eldest son, was born, to 1818, a stretch of twenty-one years, they had got out of repair. Hence, when Charles was but four years of age, it occurred to the Squire to furbish up this wing, but the process of papering, painting, and whitewashing would necessarily take time. Not only so, but the rest of Ipsden House needed renovation, and therefore a temporary exodus for the whole family seemed inevitable. They managed things differently in those days. In this year of grace, if a country gentleman had a mind to repair his house, he would either rent another in the shires or in

town, or perhaps at Brighton. In 1818 locomotion was laborious, and the sort of undertaking to be dreaded; so it was determined for the nonce to disperse the family, and, as a preliminary, son Charles, though very young indeed for so grave an experiment, was breeched, and thus technically, according to the ideas of the period, converted into a schoolboy. No doubt the poor little fellow parted with his frocks painfully, and resented the honor thus thrust upon him, but he must ere this have learned that, however much mother and sister might pet him, the rule of Ipsden was rather Stoic than Epicurean. The Squire with his hounds and his gun was no milksop. Mrs. Reade indulged her own tastes and caprices *ad libitum*, but stringently insisted upon every one else practising the virtue of self-denial. Ipsden is probably the coldest house in Europe, yet fires were all but unknown luxuries in its bedrooms; the halls and principal staircase were icy, and even in the living rooms the beechen logs, with their cheerful blaze, emitted a minimum of heat. Ladies with bare necks and arms shivered in the dining-room and clustered round the hearth-rug in the drawing-room. There was, in fact, with a superb *cuisine* of the genuine and unostentatious kind, with abundance of civilization and punctilio, a singular absence of real comfort, and Master Charles, like his sisters and brothers, learned from his cradle to rough it. The breeches, however, at the tender age of four, were a severer discipline than had been meted out to his brethren. Their symbolism was not remote. These integuments said that, being now by virtue of his breeching a boy, he must put off childish things. They warned him solemnly that the time had come to buckle to, and learn his regular lessons at stated hours, in lieu of that easy, desultory instruction which hitherto had passed muster. But above

all, he soon discovered, to his bitter grief, that these detestable breeks were destined to separate him from his dear mother, his yet dearer sister Julia, and all the glorious liberty of the nursery, for the stern decree had gone forth that he, the tiny brat of four years, should accompany his bigger brother to school.

The truth is, that his mother, much as she loved the baby Charles, loved her own whims and fancies more, and had resolved to spend the interregnum during the furbishment of Ipsden House in the gay but serious city of Bath. Mr. Fry, her evangelist, had pitched his tent there. They could drive into Somersetshire from Ipsden with their own horses by breaking the journey at Faringdon or Cirencester, and thus escape the horror of coaching. Bath was at its zenith, and it is just possible that, after twenty-two years of Ipsden, this good lady may have begun to hanker after the fleshpots of fashion, whereof she had partaken so extensively in her maiden days. Bath, therefore, was the *venue*, and Mrs. Reade had no notion of Bath in combination with a legion of brats. To her mind the glories of King Bladud's city were incompatible with the responsibilities of maternity, so she eliminated those irksome adjuncts *pro tem*, and packed off her nurseryful to school, while the rest were despatched on a round of visits to relations and friends—and thus Mrs. Reade and her husband were enabled to descend in state upon Bath without encumbrances.

The school selected for sons Charley and Compton had been started by a Mrs. Bradley at Reading. This lady must have been gifted with considerable force of character, for her ambition seems to have been both to fulfil her duties as wife and mother, and also to keep the domestic pot aboil by her own exertions. Her husband, who is de-

scribed as a dapper little fellow dressed *à la militaire*, acted the part of drill-sergeant to the pupils, but was content to allow his wife to earn his and her bread. This, by-the-bye, was no such easy feat. Mrs. Bradley happened to be nursing her first-born, and that interesting occupation must have interfered not a little with her work as an informer of the youthful mind. Infants, even when of the highest moral calibre, are apt to give tongue in season and out of season, and that which Mrs. Bradley had introduced to this terrestrial scene was no less fractious than the rest. It afforded, in short, a substantial guarantee against that over-pressure which is said to be the vice of Board Schools. The Bradley establishment must have been more of a *crèche* than a school.

The big landau with the seventeen-hand bays—the Squire plumed himself on his horse-flesh—took the two boys over to Reading by noon one fine day, and after a formal welcome from Mrs. Bradley, and a view-halloa from the suckling cherub, at one o'clock the boys sat down to dinner. The two Reades were hungry enough after their ten-mile drive, and awaited with no common interest the entrance of the viands. Grace was said, and then a huge rice pudding entered an appearance. Now rice pudding at best is rather homely fare, and it came in the shape of an unwelcome surprise. Compton accepted his helping as a matter of duty, but a glance at his brother Charley's visage warned him of an impending storm. The little fellow looked quite all the indignation he felt, and when a plateful was placed in front of him, clutched his spoon, filled it with the stodgy stuff, lifted it to his mouth, and then dropped it with a crash.

Mrs. Bradley, who had been dispensing this edible, glanced inquiringly across at her new pupil to behold

him push away plate, spoon, and all in a torrent of temper, while in a tone of absolute ill-usage he ejaculated, "Where's my meat?"

This query of course demanded explanations which were duly forthcoming, and the future author learned that whereas in the county of Oxford and parish of Ipsden the custom prevailed of eating meat first and pudding second, in the county of Berks and borough of Reading they inverted the process. On being further assured that those pupils only who ate their pudding were permitted the luxury of fibrine, Master Charles took the hint promptly, and by sedulous devotion to rice pudding earned a full commons of meat. This singular *bouleversement* of the items of the ordinary *menu* was not peculiar to Mrs. Bradley's establishment, nor to that of Mr. Squeers. It obtained in very many schools, the idea being to save the butcher's bill, and keep the boys in health. Dickens by a stroke of the pen abrogated it, but before "Nicholas Nickleby" set the world laughing, parents had got to regard the arrangement as of the nature of a swindle, and there was subsequently much indignation at Ipsden against Madame Bradley's petty economy when the story of little Charley's first dinner at school was narrated.

The rehabilitation of Ipsden House took exactly three months to complete, and at the expiration of that period Charles with his elder brother returned home. They found the nursery converted into a schoolroom, and that their *régime* in the future would be that of schoolboys, not of children. Shortly after this Compton was sent to join his brother Edward at a private tutor's near Oxford, and Charles again became the sole charge of his sister Julia. She washed him, dressed him, taught and played with him, nor would she permit any one to usurp her place.

Never was there so devoted a sister, never a boy more attached to a beautiful, *spirituelle*, and accomplished woman. Clever and brilliant herself, she made learning not only easy to him, but pleasant. He must have been largely influenced by her grace and *esprit*. It was indeed a rare privilege to have been trained even in early youth by one who, in virtue of extraordinary qualities, was enabled to command universal admiration, being herself, notwithstanding, entirely unconscious of it. Bright, animated, vivacious, yet never lacking dignity, she taught him to appreciate not merely wisdom, but wit, and to abhor mediocrity. The debt he owed to her was incalculable; indeed, her social influence throughout a brief but beautiful life was as fertilizing of good as the sunshine. During the three years when he was her pupil, Charles developed surprisingly every quality of the heart and brain. At six he could play a fine game of chess, and at seven had acquired the rudiments of a sound English education, plus that love of literature which he retained throughout his life, and which, in a degree, proved the basis of his success. It was the kind and good Julia who made him a devourer of books, and it had been well for him had she continued her work of tuition and supervision for the entire period of his boyhood. A sister's affection, however ardent and impulsive though it may be, is a transferable quality—as the little Charles, to his sorrow, was destined to discover.

About five miles from Ipsden, subtending the river's banks, and environed by parklike grounds, stands Combe Lodge, the seat then of the Gardiners. The founder of that family was a merchant or broker, who came down to Oxfordshire at the latter end of the last century, and purchased extensive estates in the parishes of Whitechurch and Goring. The younger son of Mr. Gardiner of Combe,

in 1821, was a certain Allen Francis Gardiner, a naval officer of strong religious sentiments. There was, by-the-bye, a religious vein in the Gardiner family, for some of Captain Gardiner's nearest relatives afterwards became disciples of the great Irving. A-wooing journeyed to Ipsden the gallant captain, and his suit prospered. He was evangelical, so was Julia Reade. His brain was filled with romantic visions of apostleship, so was hers. He had been a very pretty boy, and as a midshipman had played girls' parts in theatricals at Portsmouth with some *éclat*, and it is possible his future wife was able to trace the vestiges of his youthful good looks. But his features, which singularly resembled those of Lord Nelson, were bronzed, and his manner cold and stern, though doubtless not to her. From a worldly point of view the match was hardly a good one, for Captain Gardiner was a younger son, and Julia had a plethora of suitors. It was, however, essentially a love-match, and both the Squire and his wife were well pleased that their daughter had chosen a man of such natural nobility of character.

The wedding came off at Ipsden Church. Captain Gardiner's sister had just bestowed her hand on Mr. Hunt, of Buckhurst, a more than opulent squarson, among the issue of that marriage being George Ward Hunt, Chancellor of the Exchequer, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Postmaster-General under Lords Derby and Beaconsfield. There were Gardiners and Hunts in abundance at the wedding, and, indeed, all the country-side. Sixty carriages followed the bride and bridegroom to church; and, bearing in mind that there were no railways, this fact speaks volumes for the esteem in which the happy couple were held. Every one in that region knew what a fine fellow Allen Gardiner was, most had heard of the grace and

beauty of Julia Reade. So they all mustered in force to do them honor and wish them joy, little dreaming, by-the-bye, that so glorious a morning would presage a brief day for the one and a tragic termination for the other.

Before going to church the guests assembled at Ipsden House, and one can well imagine the picture of the tall, handsome Squire, perhaps more regretful than overjoyed, with his blue coat and buff waistcoat, as he nervously took out his watch, said time was up, and demanded, *sotto voce*, "Why the bride had not entered an appearance?" Sister Ellinor was despatched from the drawing-room to hurry down Miss Julia, but she returned with a puzzled face to say that the bride was not in her chamber, and could not be found. A curious smile of awkwardness passed round, and the company began to think of the old oak chest of the "Mistletoe Bough." Other messengers were sent in search, but still with the same result, till the Squire began to fume, and his wife herself ascended hastily the broad oak stairs, and in high dudgeon roamed from room to room. At last the musical note of her daughter Julia's voice caught her ear, and gave her the cue. With all speed she tripped down the passage leading to the night nursery, to behold the bride, orange-blossoms and all, hard at work dressing the youngest of her brothers.

"What, mamma," cried she, reproachfully, "do you think I would go to church without my little Charley?"

They had determined that this infinitesimal element should be omitted from the ceremony, but Julia would not have it so. Her pupil should have the last of her life and love till the moment when she pledged both to her noble husband.

And so Charles went with the rest of the big company, and no doubt, with his large, pensive eyes, took in the

whole scene. It was fraught, poor boy, with ill-omen for his happiness, for so long as Julia was at home to play mother to him, Ipsden House was able to tolerate his presence. It chanced, however, that soon after she disappeared, leaving a gap the Squire always declared could never be filled, his cousin, Emma Scott-Waring, a little tom-boy of a girl, came on a visit, and the pair took upon themselves not merely to rob the hen-roost, but further to pelt each other with the new-laid eggs. The girl, after detection, was severely punished for the sin of having enticed Master Charles from the path of rectitude, whereas, in truth, it was altogether the other way. His mother would not hear of her dear and spoiled boy being subjected to corporal chastisement, so the Squire, in order to insure its abundant application, packed him off sharp to join his elder brother Compton at Rose Hill, Iffley, near Oxford. The dominie who was their schoolmaster had already beaten his three elder brothers metaphorically into jellies, and the same horrible fate was reserved for Master Charles.

CHAPTER III.

UNDER THE ROD.

It was popularly supposed at the beginning of the century that knowledge was introduced to the human brain by dint of hard knocks on every part of the person. A boy, from that point of view, could scarcely be too severely cudgelled or too constantly flogged. Men said that the cat-o'-nine-tails won for us both Trafalgar and Waterloo, and that to make a boy a scholar and a gentleman copious flagellation was essential. Dr. Valpy earned the *sobriquet* of "Vapuly" by the horrible tortures he inflicted on his pupils, yet was generally considered, before Arnold, the model Head Master. But Valpy himself was mild and merciful in contrast with the pedagogue to whom the Squire of Ipsden intrusted his four younger boys.

The Squire perhaps may have been less blameworthy than his wife. A Rugbeian himself, John Reade not unnaturally sent his two elder sons to Rugby, while the third became a Carthusian. Yet, somehow, neither Rugby nor the Charterhouse quite satisfied Mr. Reade, who began to question whether a public-school education might not be more costly than advantageous. He therefore favored the notion of private tuition for his younger sons, but the actual selection of a private tutor he appears to have left to his wife. Now Mrs. Reade, like many clever women, had strong prejudices. Her belief in the clergy of her own way of thinking was simply amazing, and she almost in-

vested them with the attribute of infallibility. History has failed to record who recommended the Rev. Mr. Slatter, of Rose Hill, Ifley, as tutor of her boys. The cleric, whoever he was, who advised a mother to confide in so inhuman a master must have been gifted with a curious conscience. Charles Dickens's Squeers has always been accepted as a broad caricature, but this same character in some respects, though not in all, was highly colored in the person of Mr. Slatter. Life under his roof was more than purgatory—it was a positive inferno. His system has accurately been described as one of all punishment and no reward, and the wonder was that he preserved till his death a steady average of subjects to experiment upon. Nothing but the generally diffused superstition concerning the necessity of never sparing the rod could have kept him going, for severity increased with his advancing years; and though at thirty-five he was only a harsh martinet, at sixty-five he seemed to take pleasure in the physical sufferings of his pupils.

When her husband opened his school, Mrs. Slatter, who was a gentle, motherly sort of woman, often pleaded for the unfortunate youngsters who had fallen into disgrace. But as years passed on she became inured to the wails of the sufferers, or perchance discovered that her interference was of no avail. Once in every half-year each pupil was invited to spend Sunday evening with this good woman in her sanctum. On these occasions apple-tart was the style of provender; but before deglutition the guest was required to repeat the names of the Oxford Colleges. It was a singular species of entertainment, but keenly appreciated by the boys, as affording a sort of contrast to the horrors of the schoolroom. The school, in short, was repressive and crushing. Its master had acquired a cer-

tain reputation as a strict disciplinarian, but in truth his system of terrorizing stupefied his pupils. Executions went on perpetually throughout school-hours, and it was a rare occurrence for any boy to escape corporal punishment, on a larger or lesser scale, between breakfast and dinner, or dinner and tea. On a high platform, covered with red baize, in the angle of the room, posed Mr. Slater. The boys on forms sat round the green baize-covered table, a stool at the angle of the table nearest the door serving as the vehicle for one species of execution, and a very painful one indeed. Each pupil was summoned in turn, his lesson assigned him to learn by heart, and in due time he was called up to repeat it. Probably he got through the first three lines correctly, then followed some slight lapse of memory. "Hold out your hand!" was the prompt command, and down came the cane irrespective of chilblains and bruises. A small child, of course, would yell, whereupon the punishment was repeated for the fresh offence of crying. In the course of a single lesson a dozen cuts would be showered on the hands or arms; while, if the boy had omitted to learn even the first few lines, the stool above referred to was requisitioned, the child was flung across it, his back bared, and blows rained upon him. After this infliction a sitting posture was excruciating torture, for the skin was abraded and the cuticle severely bruised.

This, however, was not supposed to be the *ne plus ultra* of the inquisitor's art. In the event of any grave offence being committed the offender was invited to "come into my study, sir," a small room across the hall, and then all ears were attention to count the number of strokes inflicted on the bare flesh by the birch rod. The shrieks of the sufferer after each stroke were duly timed, but not

seldom obscured by wild and frantic cries for mercy—an appeal utterly fruitless.

Of course the boys learned nothing, or next door to nothing. The Latin grammar was written in Latin, and committed to memory without reference to any meaning the words might have. Mr. Slatter never explained, or *taught*. He sat on his throne to hear lessons *said*. If the task was repeated accurately, the pupil escaped the cane. That was his negative reward. If he repeated ninety-nine words only out of a hundred he got caned for the odd one. And this was what Mr. Slatter facetiously termed “grounding” in Latin!

It was a somewhat singular fact that the smaller boys at Rose Hill suffered the most. When a sturdy youth kicked Mr. Slatter’s shins, though vendetta followed promptly, he self-guarded his corpus against future vivisection. That same sturdy boy is now an Admiral in Her Majesty’s fleet, and if he peruses these lines may recall to memory how pluckily he stuck to the wall, kicked with all his might, and was only dragged to the stool of torture after a stiff resistance, wherein he did not altogether come off worst. But at the time he was not a junior, and in fact had passed through a long ordeal of suffering as a small boy before he mustered up courage to resist. It would have been well had his example been followed by all. The writer, after a lapse of forty-five years, sees as clearly as though it were to-day, a little child of six, a widow’s son and pet, who had been most tenderly nurtured, and was sent from Oxford to Ifley for afternoon lessons only. He sees this child caned till his hysterical crying could not cease, and his whole body was swollen with the blows. In after-years he heard that same child as a man, and a dying man, curse the name of Slatter,

though that merciless torturer who had rendered his childhood a hell lay under the sod of Iffley churchyard.

It is possible that the Squire might have hesitated before consigning his son Charles to this harsh disciplinarian but for an unlucky circumstance. His three elder sons needed no severe curb. But the fourth son, William Barrington, was endowed by nature with a turbulent spirit. Though physically the little one of the family, his high spirit was only equalled by an inordinate love of mischief, and his cuticle was so tough, his muscles so hard, that it needed something akin to a surgical operation to make him feel at all. This rough-and-tumble youth appears somewhat to have startled Mr. Slatter, who had been accustomed to operate on sensitive subjects, and was puzzled proportionately by a phenomenal insensibility to pain. On arriving at Rose Hill Master William Barrington dined with the rest in total silence—the rule of the school. He ate his meat without observation; but when the spotted dog made its appearance, the new boy exclaimed incontinently, “I say, Mr. Slatter, the plums in this pudding are calling out to each other, ‘Here be I, Jack; where be you?’” The school tittered in the subdued fashion of convicts with the lash always impending, whereupon Mr. Slatter summoned Master William Barrington to “stand out;” and, laying down his fork and spoon, clutched the cane, and began to play upon the new boy vigorously. To his chagrin, however, the blows made no impression, indeed the victim did not wince, but smiled as at a supreme jest. At last, however, he observed, in a tone of mild reproach, suggestive of the possibility of overdoing even the best of jokes, “I say, if you keep on that much longer you’ll *hurt* me!” Needless to add, that however severely he might be thrashed, this same Master William

Barrington was much too proud to carry home a grumble; indeed in his case it would have been fruitless, for the Squire would have replied that in beating so fractious a boy the master was only doing his duty.

With William Barrington there went to Mr. Slatter's Edward Anderdon, the fifth son, whose powers of application were abnormal, and who escaped the cane simply because he always mastered his lessons. Later on Compton, the sixth son, joined his brothers, and on him descended the full force of the pedagogue's right arm. Pride, however, kept his tongue silent. His elder brothers had not complained, and had he protested against the severity to which he was subjected he would have been gibbeted in the family circle as an idler. He omitted, therefore, to warn his mother against Mr. Slatter, and the little Charles, not yet eight years of age, became one of his victims.

Compton had been his younger brother's companion at Mrs. Bradley's, and was ready to fight his battle at Rose Hill. But what can a small boy of ten do in opposition to a master, and that master a bully? It was the practice of this most peculiar of pedagogues to make the acquaintance of a new pupil within a few hours of his entry into the school by vigorous chastisement. There was no hypocrisy about Mr. Slatter. He did not pretend to be his pupils' friend, and whale their bodies for the good of their souls. Nothing of the kind. He made it clear as crystal that you had come there to be thrashed, possibly for your own good, certainly for his gratification. He therefore welcomed Charles Reade as a new subject, and a very promising one, inasmuch as, unlike his pachydermatous brother, William Barrington, he evinced an acute sense of pain. Day after day the child's flesh was lacerated by the cruel cane, until at last his brother Compton, who had borne his

own floggings with fortitude, but could not so indifferently endure the spectacle of Charles's torment, up and spoke.

The occasion was Sunday, a day which might well have been treated as an armistice. Charles, just before the boys were marched off in double file to Ifley Church, had perpetrated some peccadillo. The church bells were ringing, and there was no time for an execution, so Mr. Slatter in remarking on this fact added, "Never mind, Charles, you shall be flogged after divine service." Master Compton heard, and his heart swelled beneath his jacket with indignation. Was it not enough to beat the little fellow?—must mental be added to bodily agony? Not if a word would stop it; and he resolved that, come what might, and the odds were that interference would entail condign punishment, that word should not be left unsaid.

Accordingly, after the function was over, and the boys were trooping sadly back to Rose Hill, he said, "Sir, I wish to speak to you. Do you think it fair to keep my brother in a state of suspense all through church time? You know how nervous he is, already he has suffered ten-fold more than any flogging."

Whether it was the point, or the audacity of this speech, or a secret dread lest a report to his disadvantage might travel as far as Ipsden, certain it is that Mr. Slatter let Charles off his flogging. Compton's remonstrance, moreover, had an ulterior effect, for though his own back suffered as before, he had the satisfaction of remarking that Mr. Slatter slightly abated his severity towards Charles. Existence, however, even under such mitigated conditions was simply penal. There was seldom or never cricket, no football or hockey, no fishing or boating at Rose Hill. The boys bathed in Ifley lasher during the summer months, and were allowed to garden in the spring, but

there were no games. Two and two, with Mr. Slatter to the rear, the miserable children marched along the Ifley road for about an hour a day. That was the extent of their exercise. Boyhood could not have been more systematically dwarfed, and the marvel is that the pupils did not emerge from this *peine forte et dur* in a condition of abject idiocy.

The subjoined are three letters from the small boy at Rose Hill to the family circle. It is superfluous to hint that inasmuch as Mr. Slatter supervised all his pupil's correspondence no allusion to a bleeding and bruised cuticle was feasible. The first, of which a fac-simile is given on the following page, is to his mother.

The next seems addressed to Julia and Ellinor. It runs thus:

"MY DEAR SISTERS,—I hope you and Edward are quite well. I arrived at Mr. Slatter's house on the 1st, and at his study on the 2d, where I have *fagged* with unremitting *industry* till this day. Edward will soon go to India I fear, but I wish he would just come and visit me before he *sails*. I want him to get, alias obtain, us a whole holiday, which is very desirable here, by the way. And if he cannot come, you and mamma must come and beseech Mr. Slatter until he giveth one unto us. Edward gave me a certain book called 'The Son of a Genius,' which I forgot to bring with me. That also you must bring with 'e.' Mamma's ruler has greatly assisted me in this letter. I have got a Cornu Ammonis, or petrified snake, for you, which you had better come and possess. Tell mamma that quire of paper did not come here. I have got a very bad pen. Shew this letter to mamma and Julia. Write to me any questions about * * * Keep this letter till I come back. Keep every other letter of mine till then.

"Your affectionate

BROTHER."

The asterisks probably refer to Mr. Slatter, who, inconsistently enough, though he perused every line sent home by his pupils, did not read the letters they received. The appeal for a holiday is rather piteous—a respite he might

I remember writing this
sprightly epistle and being very
proud of the first line.
Sallust. Feb 1071

The endowment is of
daddy's writing

My dear Mother;

Charles Reade

I am happy to inform you, our
vacation commences on the 22^d inst. when I
hope to see you and all at home quite well.
As to my progress, I am still reading Caesar,
but I have entered upon Sallust and Xen-
ophon. Give my love to all at home, and
receive the same from your dutiful Son,
Rose Hill.
June 7th 1825: Charles Reade.

have termed it from the diurnal cane. The "e" for you was doubtless a bit of schoolboy fun at the expense of Mrs. Slatter. In the next letter he drops the same sort of hint in a broader fashion. Probably he had imitated, for the amusement of his sisters, that worthy woman's Doric eccentricities.

The following bears the date February 17, but the year is omitted. It was in all likelihood 1825. The handwriting is legible.

"MY DEAR SISTERS,—I am glad you liked my fine letter, and hope you will like this better. I hope *this*—lay a stress—letter will also be better received by you than mamma's, which will reach her on the same day as this does you. Since I have had more time for the better formation of my letter, having finished this tedious discourse, I enter upon *narratives*. There was a certain word in mamma's letter which I could not make out. It was as follows: 'I am very anxious to know whether you are likely—' something or other? Please ask mamma what it was, and when you write to me, which I hope will be soon, mention it. Edward will most likely be detained by the contrary winds. Write to me soon, and tell me how he does, and all about him. I am afraid he is 'gawn awa frae Ipsden.' I pity his taste, but think he has as many advantages as a young man could expect. I have such excellent eggs, the yelk (*sic*) luke-warmed and the white raw. Mrs. Slatter won't do them any better, though I frequently ask *her*. I have often wished myself at home to bid E. good-bye. My paper costs me more than you think. It cost a half-penny a sheet. I have written four letters, two to you, one to Mamma, and one to Compton. Give my sincerest, faithful love to Edward and Mamma, etc., etc., and write soon, I beseech you, to your affectionate brother,

"CHARLES READE.

"I hope to find Julia at home when I come, which won't be so over-soon, by the way. I hoped to see Allen and Julia at this very house. You never knew me to write such a letter before. I beg mamma's pardon for writing to you before her."

The effect of Mr. Slatter's cruelty on a child of a sensitive temperament, yet naturally virile, may have been less

absolutely injurious than might easily be presupposed. Charles Reade, be it remembered, was not a London boy, reared in an enervating atmosphere among comforts that might appropriately be termed luxuries. He had been petted, spoiled, and as regards brains, forced, but in other respects his home training had been fairly robust. At Ipsden there were not alone ladies exceptionally cultured, who doted on a clever child, but a hunting and shooting Squire also, with his cohort of elder sons, as fond of the harriers and horses, the woods and the warren, as was their sire. Hence, although Charles both suffered and winced under Mr. Slatter's rod, that terrible weapon toughened his cuticle and taught him to think less of pain. It does not appear to have utterly stupefied him, as was the case generally; indeed, in after-life he was fond of pointing to the singular paradox, that whereas at the cane's point he had learned like a parrot his grammars, totally without reference to any possible meaning the words might possess, afterwards when he came to be taught by a capable tutor, and Latin was made intelligible, he was amazed to discover the amount of rudimentary philology wherewith his mind was stored. If you can imagine a Turk with no knowledge whatever of English being compelled to learn by heart the entirety of Shakespeare's plays, and then acquiring the English tongue, and with it an appreciation of our immortal dramatist, you will realize exactly the mental process through which Charles Reade's mind was made to pass. The grammars placed in his hand by Mr. Slatter were written in Latin—one might say with truth in canine Latin—and they had to be repeated from end to end verbatim, the learner not being informed as to any meaning the rules or examples might have. Not only so, but such ridiculous doggerel as the "*Propria quæ maribus*" and "*As in*

presenti" would have been a useless *memoria technica* for advanced pupils, while for children just fresh from the nursery they were sheer hocus-pocus. Dr. Valpy of Reading, who served as an exalted apology for Mr. Slatter's severity, was said to have publicly birched before the whole school one of his own children for inability to acquire this same hateful jargon, and the horrible agonies they caused the wretched boys of Rose Hill can hardly be imagined, still less described. The system was one which, apart from its savagery, aimed at improving the memory, and it is a fact that gibberish learned by rote adheres to the brain; nevertheless, oddly enough, Mr. Slatter's pupils had exceptionally bad memories, except for the rubbish he beat into their heads. Certainly Charles Reade was his most brilliant pupil, and yet in after-years, as will appear, he all but lost his fellowship owing to the difficulty he experienced in committing to memory the Thirty-nine Articles in Latin. Mr. Slatter, as the cant phrase of the day went, grounded him, *i.e.*, forced him by constant torture to acquire what must have appeared to his young mind lunatical gibberish, and it was only when he had subsequently passed through a course of *bond fide* teaching that he awoke to the fact of the same unintelligible gibberish being rudimentary philology expressed in dog Latin. A boy of exceptional talent, if he had been placed under a conscientious and able tutor, could with facility have mastered the Latin grammar in twelve months. At Rose Hill in five years he had learned it, but was perfectly ignorant of what he had learned. What graver satire could be written on the perverse plan of digesting first and comprehending afterwards? It finds an appropriate parallel in the fervid piety of the Irish Catholics, who sing hymns and litanies in Latin as devotional exercises, without the faintest concep-

tion of what they mean. It was the Slatterian system which caused the mediæval priest to sing "mumpsimus" instead of "sumpsimus," and when found fault with to retort that it was all the same.

In justice to Mr. Slatter it must be added that he fed his pupils satisfactorily. Breakfast, it is true, was not appetizing, the provender being thick slices of stale bread scraped over with imperceptible butter. Dinner, however, was excellent. Mr. Slatter grew his own mutton, and it was a specialty. The culinary arrangements left little to be desired, and everything was scrupulously clean. Each boy, however, was expected to bring to Rose Hill the stomach of one of Horace's reapers, and to devour everything that was put before him. It was a sin of the first magnitude to leave a fragment of fat or gristle on the edge of your plate, and the boy who did so rendered himself liable to subsequent flagellation.

Now to most young children fat of all kinds superinduces nausea, and therefore the custom of the school was for boys not provided with the stomachs of ostriches to slip what pieces of fat they could not swallow into their pocket-handkerchiefs, the result being that their jacket and trousers pockets were in a condition too filthy to be thought of before the end of the half-year. But for this petty tyranny and a *jejune* breakfast-table, the dietary of Rose Hill would have merited our warm encomium. Under its influence a boy like Charles Reade, who was all the worse both mentally and physically for the incessant flogging, contrived to thrive and grow. Birch and cane may have retarded the natural development of his brain, but the mutton made his muscles, and when he left Rose Hill for good it was as an exceptionally fine, erect, picturesque boy, whose physique was almost phenomenal, but whose

education had yet to commence. What little he knew had been imparted to him in the nursery by his sister Julia; while as regards positive knowledge, its acquisition had been interrupted for five long years, and he had thus to make a fresh start heavily handicapped. Rose Hill had been a palpable error. Nevertheless, incredible although it may appear, Mrs. Reade was so enamoured of its more than Spartan system as to have consigned a nephew to the tender mercies of Mr. Slatter, and, later on, a grandson. It was part of her theory of education that a boy could not be too accurately well beaten, and that the weaker and more tender and more sensitive he was, the more excruciating ought to be his agonies. If only this good lady could in her proper person have suffered the experiences narrated so graphically by the author of "*Vice Versâ*," her theory might have undergone some modification. A five minutes' flogging, scientifically inflicted by so consummate a vivisector as Mr. Slatter, would have dissipated those fallacious ideas which caused her to condemn her own flesh and blood to the torment of an inferno.

The precise reason which induced her to remove, after five years' penal servitude, her favorite son Charles from Mr. Slatter's jurisdiction can only be surmised. Possibly she may have found out that he was learning nothing, and withal in considerable danger of being brutalized. Possibly the warnings of her son Compton as to the maleficent effects of Rose Hill discipline may have influenced her. It is even within the bounds of probability that son Charles himself may have whispered in her ear that a little instruction would be more profitable than much beating. Anyhow, he was sent to join his elder brother at Mr. Hearn's, a clergyman residing at Staines; but the reminiscences of Rose Hill were perhaps the most unpleasant of his life.

CHAPTER IV.

“AT STAINES.”

SCHOOL-LIFE may be a happy epoch, if not the happiest, in man's mortal existence, or it may be much the reverse—a term of years to be held in bitter remembrance. So far as Charles Reade's experience went, he had reason to recoil from such a memory as that of Rose Hill. Nothing save innate qualities of the highest order could have preserved him from becoming under Mr. Slatter's system both dwarfed and dulled. It was a happy circumstance indeed that he quitted that scene of vivisection, and ceased himself to be experimented upon at a comparatively early age. His brain and temperament had still the power of recovery, and it needed only reasonable liberty and intelligent tuition to mature both. His elder brothers had been taught by Mr. Slatter's rod to revolt from classical study, and to this bathos Charles might have reached but for his providential escape from the domination of that ogre. Two years more of Rose Hill, and it would be safe to predict that he would never have been Fellow of Magdalen, author, and world-renowned celebrity. His very brain must have been flattened into mediocrity by tyranny and terrorizing. Read or witness the scenes of brutality enacted within the four walls of the jail in the drama-novel “It is Never too Late to Mend,” and you will find there reproduced his own child-life under Mr. Slatter. “I am so very tired !” is the refrain that must often and often

have been wrung from his boyish lips as the cruel cane descended on unhealed wounds, and made him hate the very breath he drew. That raw-boned iron-faced man was the merciless warder of his drama, and the little boy done to death *himself*. True, the hard master stopped short of manslaughter; but at Rose Hill there was no Mr. Eden to come to the rescue as *Deus ex machinâ*. The boys groaned to the tune of "I am so very tired," till the order of release arrived, and they were set free.

The change from Rose Hill to Staines can only be compared to one from a diet of gall to one of champagne. Compton, who had preceded his younger brother to the charming Berkshire town, made such rapid progress in every respect under the tuition of Mr. Hearn, who combined tutorial work with the cure of the parish, as virtually to have paved the way for Charles. Mrs. Reade had a keen, observant eye of her own, eccentric although she was in many respects; and she could not have failed to contrast the vivacity of the boy in clover with the down-trodden weariness of the boy whose hours were a burden to him. Be that as it may, after Compton had been for a term under Mr. Hearn, Charles was removed from Mr. Slatter's and sent to join his brother.

What a metamorphosis it was! Mr. Hearn, who appears to have been a gentleman, handled his pupils as such, his object being not to dragoon, but to develop. He soon discovered what splendid material he had to work upon in Charles, and how it had been cribbed, confined, and confined under a repressive and ill-conditioned system. Of course he had to commence *de novo*, to explain and guide, to revive what under Julia had been an ardent, but was now a crushed, love of learning, and to try and save the wrecks of the years Mr. Slatter had wasted. Moreover, he

was no martinet. He recognized the wisdom of the *corpus sanum* as dominating more or less the *mens sana*, and in consequence gave his pupils quite as much rope as was at all desirable. His plan was to interfere as little as might be with their amusements, and to utilize to the utmost the all-precious hours devoted to study. Such a master was of course liable to be deceived in matters of trifling moment, for boys will always take advantage of their superior officer's laxity; but, on the other hand, he brought out all that was in a boy. Himself a scholar, not only in regard of the dead languages, but in English also, he possessed in a high degree the happy art of persuading his pupils to think for themselves; and when the pathway of knowledge to the beginner seemed so rough and rugged as to be impassable, his sympathetic mind, appreciating alike difficulties and their solution, was ever ready with assistance. Charles Reade owed not a little of his literary facility to this same humble, obscure Curate of Staines.

As it happened, his fellow-pupils were all boys of parts and capacity. Besides his brother Compton, for whose ability he to the last entertained no small esteem, there were three boys in every respect much above the average under Mr. Hearn's roof. These were Edwin James, afterwards Q.C. and M.P., a man whose forensic brilliance would have certainly secured him the woolsack, but for an error which quashed his career; and with him a brother scarcely less clever; and Mr. William Bovill, subsequently of the Chancery bar. The Staines *régime* was by no means all Thucydides and Cicero, Homer and Horace. Torture not entering into the educational theory of benevolent Mr. Hearn, the boys developed amazing fortitude and enterprise. They soon got to appreciate the value of the old adage, "When the cat's away the mice will play,"

and inasmuch as their feline supervisor was not always in evidence, were enabled to fulfil the functions of sportive mice almost without let or hinderance. There were rules, of course, rules just sufficiently stringent to render their breakage a luxury ; but Mr. Hearn was so absent and unobservant that it really was by no means easy to be found out. The boys, therefore, or rather the seniors among them, did pretty much according to their own sweet wills, appearances *pro formâ* being kept up, and a little dust occasionally thrown in the master's eyes.

Charles had not been long an alumnus of good Mr. Hearn when an opportunity was afforded him of "derring do," and that too of the kind to test both his pluck and presence of mind, and also to raise him to the highest pitch of popularity with his schoolfellows. He was between thirteen and fourteen years of age, tall, symmetrical, graceful, and attractive. Ipsden, moreover, had taught him agility, and he was already beginning to display prowess in cricket. Such a boy was well qualified to be the hero of an adventure, and he certainly, on the occasion to which we refer, played his part as an actor to the manner born.

His brother Compton, like the old Squire, was a sportsman to the core. He inherited his sire's idolatry of the Ipsden woods, and at that period of his life would cheerfully have accepted the position of gamekeeper had it been thrust upon him. He had, therefore, at Edwin James's suggestion, very readily joined with him in a sort of partnership in sporting dogs. Worthy Mr. Hearn knew nothing of this, for the dogs were kept a quarter of a mile off, and he disdained espionage, so the boys fancied they were safe from detection. A country town, however, has eyes and ears for everybody's business, and some malicious Paul

Pry—male or female—carried the intelligence to the tutor. At once that amiable gentleman, who rather plumed himself on a lavish *copia verborum* in the pulpit, and could really at times ascend to eloquence, summoned his pupils *en masse* before him, and without asking questions proceeded to deliver a powerful oration against sporting dogs, and the outrageous wickedness of keeping such incentives to disobedience without magisterial permission. In his tatters-torn passion it was perhaps rather obscure whether, according to his notions, dogs or deceit were the greater evil. On the whole, however, it became fairly apparent that, although he hated deceit much, he hated dogs more, and meant, if he could, to expel them from the extremest limits of that social circle whereof he was the centre. After much exercitation of lungs and larynx to enforce this view, Mr. Hearn at last ran down, fairly exhausted; not, however, before, in tones of stern reproach intended to lacerate the guilty conscience, he had urged his auditory, all and singular, to step forward and make a plenary confession.

A dead silence was the only response to this forcible suggestion. The confessional happens to be about the very last place a puerile fly would permit himself to be inveigled into by a magisterial spider. Ergo, Mr. Hearn changed his tactics.

"John Edwin James," he exclaimed, in a voice choking with emotion, "be good enough to say what you know about these dogs." We may remark, parenthetically, that although Mr. James in after-years dropped the "John," that was his Christian name, and by it he was known in Mr. Hearn's establishment.

The embryo Q.C. rose to the occasion. Assuming an air of conscious innocence, he boldly challenged his master

to find the dogs if he could. They were, so he hardily affirmed, an *ignus fatuus*, a mere figment of Mr. Hearn's overwrought imagination.

But the tutor was not to be foiled. His informant had not only told the tale of the pointers and setters, but also where these quadrupeds were lodged. A smile of satirical significance flitted across his features as he replied firmly, "Very well; we will soon see all about that. Be good enough to follow me, and if, John, I detect you in a falsehood, sir—if, sir, you have added to deceit and disobedience the sin of bare-faced mendacity, why—"

"All right!" was John Edwin James's jaunty rejoinder, and the entire household donned their headgear and sallied forth, to witness, as they imagined, the discomfiture of the imperturbable offender.

Except one. Charles Reade was fagging away at an ode of Horace, and being naturally of a studious disposition, remained behind without exciting either observation or suspicion. He, however, as will appear, had other ideas in his head beyond *alcaics* and *sapphics*. Edwin James had passed him that sort of wink which is proverbially as good as a nod, and he was ready for action, while yet to all appearance immersed in his "*Quum tu Lydia*," or "*Jam Satis*." The situation was just dramatic enough to be relished by him dearly, and he entered into it with all the gusto of Guy Fawkes.

At the back of Mr. Hearn's residence, beyond the garden fence, was a very large meadow, its extreme limit being a sort of broad dyke. Beyond this was situated the cottage and yard of a member of the rat-catching fraternity, one of the *Filthy Lucre* variety, who was handy for any kind of job, the more illegal the better suited to his tastes. He it was whom Mr. Hearn suspected of harbor-

ing the sporting dogs of Messrs. Edwin James—or John, as he ought to be described—and Compton Reade, and thither the good man marched all his pupils; the principal culprit, with rare effrontery, engaging him closely in conversation as they bestrode the turnpike road subtending his domicile, until they reached the lane leading to the rat-catcher's abode. Here again the future Q.C. exhausted all his stock of volubility, until at last the entire party faced the rat-catcher's cottage, while their leader knocked at the door authoritatively.

"Where is your husband?" was the brisk demand. The woman smiled as she informed Mr. Hearn that he had just stepped out in the opposite direction.

"Then," said the tutor, "I must trouble you to allow me to inspect your back-yard. I am told there are some dogs there belonging to these gentlemen."

"Dogs!" echoed the woman with uplifted hands, as though deprecating, *ab imo corde*, any such enormity. "Oh, no, sir; there are no dogs. But you can see for yourself."

John Edwin James tittered sardonically, a proceeding which not a little incensed Mr. Hearn, who strode forward into the yard to find, as the woman had said, plenty of kennels, but no dogs in them.

That was James's chance. With an air of triumph he demanded where the dogs might be? "Are the animals mythical or real, sir?" he asked, turning to his master, while his fellow-pupils joined gleefully in a chorus of laughter at Mr. Hearn's discomfiture. Indeed, the impudent boy exceeded the largest limits in his banter, until at last Mr. Hearn, who guessed the trick he had been served, cried aloud in his wrath, "John, John, I could smite thee to the earth!"

And so the party marched back again to the house in solemn silence, and Charles was discovered, as they had left him, cramming his Horace, and oblivious of the very existence of such a vertebrate as the dog.

Nevertheless, it was he who throughout had pulled the wires. No sooner had they started on this march of discovery than, *presto*, his long, agile legs carried him swiftly across the meadow, he cleared the dyke at a bound, and in less than two minutes had explained the situation to the rat-catcher, packed him and the dogs out of the house, and, better still, out of sight, and then with all expedition returned by the way he came. Mr. Hearn, though fully aware of being tricked, never learned who it was managed it so cleverly, and least of all suspected Charles Reade.

The episode was beneficial in two ways to its perpetrator, negatively and positively. Negatively, because Mr. Hearn, being unsuspecting, continued to regard him as his most promising pupil, and lavished on him attention and kindness, both of which were of the greatest service in developing a sensitive child, still smarting under previous ill-usage; and positively, because thereby Charles Reade won the regard of the cock of the school. Edwin James ruled the roost at Staines, his robust temperament exacting homage imperiously from his fellows, and the fact of his being Charles Reade's patron was largely in favor of the latter's comfort and peace of mind.

As an appropriate pendant to this chapter we give a letter of Charles Reade to his sister Ellinor, the guest of his brother Edward, then the tenant of Ipsden House:

6 BOLTON ROW, MAYFAIR, *December 27 (1861?)*

"MY DEAR ELLEN,—I am glad to hear you have got safe to Ipsden for Christmas. Keep a good fire in your bedroom, and then perhaps native air will do you no harm.

"I do not like to run any risk of being *de trop*, and I think at this time of the year the master of the house should be allowed to make his own arrangements.

"Mrs. Hearn is in very poor circumstances, and I have sent her £5 this Christmas-tide. I learned her situation from my old schoolfellow Bovill, now a Chancery Barrister. I met her on Clapham Common, and renewed her acquaintance after so many years.

"I enclose her note for your edification, which you can burn after perusal. Will you be kind enough to ask Amy (his niece) to direct you to a woman I shot at my last visit, and lay out on her £1 this cold weather. Blankets—fuel—muffetees—cash.

"I don't shoot women every day, and Christmas comes but once a year.

"I will duly repay you the same.

"Love to all.

"Your affectionate Brother,

CHARLES READE."

At this time, we must remark, he was not overflush of ready cash, and £5 was really a relatively large sum, albeit, contrasted with his munificence later on, it seems almost niggardly. Evidently, on receiving Mr. Bovill's information he lost no time in paying a visit to Clapham in order to discover his former tutor's widow, and this little circumstance testifies indirectly to the gratitude he cherished for that worthy man's careful tuition.

CHAPTER V.

SAVED BY A SECOND.

LIFE at Staines flowed with average smoothness, varied by a few breezes and no storms. Mr. Hearn appears to have kept the main chance steadily in view, and to have energized for his pupil's advancement in classics. Being, however, himself a man with a fine perception of the music of language, a rhetorician if not an orator, he paid especial attention to English composition. In after-life Charles Reade bitterly regretted that he had never been at a public school, nor was there any reason why he should not have gone to Rugby or the Charterhouse like his elder brothers. It happened, however, that Mr. Hearn compensated for the loss indirectly. He discovered in Charles Reade one, like himself, with an intuitive capacity for expression, coupled with a quick perception, a vivid imagination, and a more than ordinary power of generalization. By a strange paradox, a preacher whose model was the vapid Blair, contrived to infuse into his promising pupil a love of epigram, a terse, concise style, and a vigorous method. Mrs. Reade sent her pet son to Staines to be converted into a scholar. That was beyond the utmost *possible* of Mr. Hearn, who had attained to no more than the level of scholarship which satisfied parental ideas at that time of day. But he did better for the boy than if he had been a Porson or a Conington. He taught him how to wield his pen, and that was indeed instruction. None better.

It is a far cry back to the twenties, and Charles Reade left behind him no record of his school-days. To the last his mind was so immersed in objects of passing interest, more particularly the drama and literature, that he escaped that retrospective mental attitude which seems to be the normal concomitant of age. He was, too, never a great talker, albeit when he chose to exercise his conversational powers he could be not merely brilliant, but fascinating. Except in a passing allusion to his boyhood at Ipsden, he seldom dwelt even for a moment on that period of his life, if indeed his brain ever recalled it. For his youth he sighed, sometimes with strange bitterness, as though age had robbed him of his rights; for his boyhood never. Ifley had left so bitter an after-taste as to cause him to dismiss it finally from his memory, and Staines he seems to have passed by as a colorless episode. Colorless it certainly was, yet it so happened that but for the presence of mind of his brother Compton its hue might have been strangely darkened. In plain English, he may be said to have narrowly escaped with limb, if not with life.

The parish church of Staines, whereof, as has been said, Mr. Hearn was the assistant minister, happened to be undergoing one of those singular processes of beautification and improvement which the churchwardens of the Georgian era deemed advisable in the interest of æstheticism. True, their notions of art differed remarkably from those of Pugin and Gilbert Scott. Whitewash and stucco were the materials they especially affected, and if an ecclesiastical edifice showed signs of decay, their plan was to tie it, or clamp it, or prop it, or patch it. This effected, they painted in gold letters on a black ground their services in having renovated their church, and placed this bold advertisement in the most conspicuous place. They thought

themselves the Solomons of their generation, and were proud of the title.

Staines Church seems at the epoch we are considering to have needed something more substantial than a churchwarden's restoration, inasmuch as its condition was rickety and tumble-down in the extreme. Moreover, in country towns when George was King the population was much more zealous in its attendance at church than is the case at present, and Mr. Hearn preached every Sunday to a large and possibly attentive congregation. As a disciple of the great and, be it added, good Mr. Simeon of Cambridge, he may be supposed to have drawn, as the phrase went; for rhetoric was at that time of day much in request, and sermons, however ponderous they might be, found ready listeners. Consequently Staines Church, ugly and tottering though it was, filled well, and the congregations were as large as appreciative.

The churchwardens and their *padre*, Mr. Govett, do not appear to have paid much attention to the insecure condition of the fabric. Archdeacons in those days, albeit they wielded powers of an autocratic character such as they have long since been relieved of, were tolerably indifferent about using them. At the same time, when a church came down with a run, those dignitaries would suddenly awake to the consideration that the province of an archdeacon was, as Sydney Smith tersely phrased it, to perform archidiaconal functions, and in that event a parish was mulcted by a colossal rate. Hence, when Staines Church exhibited, at last, unmistakable symptoms of converting itself incontinently into a ruinous heap of *débris*, its responsible guardians took fright, and when one of the side walls began to bulge externally, actually commenced repairs in good earnest.

The poor old church, however, was virtually beyond tinkering. It had been galleried, and high pewed, and whitewashed, and plastered; but neither the plaster, nor the whitewash, nor the high pews would support the side walls, which were simply being forced out externally by the weight of the galleries. These walls had not been built to support anything more ponderous than the roof and their own weight; and though, when the wardens in their wisdom piled Pelion super Ossam in the shape of galleries resting on beams dovetailed into the masonry, the overburdened walls bore their burden bravely without reference to dynamics, still the time came when the extra pressure loosened the said masonry, and then everything betokened an immediate collapse. Too late the churchwardens realized the extent of the mischief, and prepared to act.

They first made the not unimportant discovery, by the simple process of removing the soil, that the foundations were quite rotten. Having satisfied themselves generally of this rather alarming phenomenon, they next proceeded to excavate, largely, in order to ascertain the full extent of the mischief, a feat of engineering which would have been quite justifiable had they contemplated closing the church. It never seems to have occurred to their minds that by exposing the foundations and then cramming the galleries with human beings they were making tolerably certain of a collapse; in fact, they were acting with a noble indifference to every architectural consideration. There is, moreover, a strong and incomprehensible prejudice against premitting the ritual of the Church of England for any consideration whatever. *Si fractus illabatur orbis*, the average incumbent would go on with his function, unless indeed nervousness overpowered him, in

which event he would secure at any cost the services of a Locum Tenens. This is no exaggeration, since it remains an historical fact that when Canterbury Cathedral was on fire, and the roof all ablaze, they proceeded with the usual choral service as though nothing was the matter. In the same vein of heroism, though Staines Church was known to be in a highly dangerous state, Messrs. Govett and Hearn, as its Priest and Levite, never dreamed of postponing divine service until after the needful repairs had been completed. Whatever might happen, the sacred routine must be kept up.

The congregation duly assembled in the morning of Sunday, and nothing of an untoward character happened. The good people of Staines were, so it is recorded, rather fidgety, but the success of the morning's experiment reassured them, and an overflowing congregation mustered for the evening service. Again it seemed as though all would go smoothly, and in truth but few suspected the proximity of peril, when in the middle of the service a crash was heard like unto thunder, and the entire north wall fell after the manner of those of Jericho.

The effect on the congregation can only be described as paradoxical. Had any such catastrophe happened in a theatre, the shrieks and shouts would have been deafening. As it was, the magical influence of Church prevailed over every other consideration. The people did not utter more than a low murmur, but then followed none the less a mad rush to escape, for every one anticipated, not without cause, that the galleries and roof would follow suite, and the church become in a trice a pile of ruins. It was remembered afterwards that the only member of the congregation who uttered a cry was a man with a wooden leg, which artificial prop got fixed tight in

a plug, thereby preventing him from motion. The rest, in silence, made for the doors pell-mell.

Compton, with admirable presence of mind, was among the first to grasp the situation and make his escape. Then he looked round for his brother Charles. The boy was not visible among the crowd; the rafters had begun to fall like minute guns; the danger was imminent and overpowering. Could Charles Reade have already suffered damage? He was light of limb and agile, well adapted for a stampede. The chances were, therefore, that some mishap had befallen him. A moment's thought, and Compton faced the hurrying crowd blanched with fear at the noise of falling timber, pushed his way through them to the pew where his brother had been seated, and started to perceive it to all appearance deserted.

He was about to emerge for the second time from the church, when by a fortunate instinct he pushed open the door of the large, square, baize-lined pew to see a pair of legs, and in another second the entire body of his brother crouching beneath the seat. Quickly and resolutely he dragged him forth, whispered that not a second was to be lost, and as he hauled the terrified boy from the church porch, the roof fell.

They were among the last out of the doomed edifice. No one, happily, was hurt, not even the man with the wooden leg, and in the twenties neither sex dreamed of dying of nerves. But the scene was one to be not inaptly termed melodramatic. It had its serious, and might have had its tragic, aspect, nor was it altogether without its vein of comedy. Staines, like most country towns, boasted a commercial academy, and the pupils of that institution were seated solemnly in the gallery when the crash came. Their pedagogue with fine promptitude pro-

pelled his masculine form through the scurrying crowd, and was actually one of the earliest to reach the churchyard with a whole skin. Arrived at that point of vantage, the worthy instructor in the three R's suddenly be-thought him of his pupils, who might, for aught he knew to the contrary, at that very moment be undergoing a pulverizing or flattening process. He was naturally an economical man, one who practised in private life all the arithmetic it was his privilege to impart to budding shop-walkers and embryo clerks. At such a crisis, however, he doubtless thought that a little spice of recklessness might be allowable, if not appropriate. Hence, in an unwonted burst of extravagance he shrieked, "My boys, my boys! I will give any one *ten shillings* who will rescue my boys!" To anticipate, the said boys required little or no rescuing, for they were quick to follow their revered master's example; but the lavish offer of ten shillings for a whole school, if alive, induced the pupils of Mr. Hearn subsequently to indulge in a calculation as to how much the life of each member of the Staines Commercial Academy was rated at by its master, and it appeared that the precise sum was threepence!

In Charles Reade's "Commonplace Book" we find the following references to Edwin James and the above incident, the exact details of which have been furnished by his brother Compton:

"(1.) *John Edwin James*, late illustrious Queen's Counsel, now these many years under a sad cloud. My old schoolfellow of Staines Lodge. Three years my senior. Such a sharp boy!

"(2.) This gentleman was my schoolfellow at Staines for more than two years. We were in church there together when the transept fell in. Just as the Vicar repeated his text for the twentieth time, 'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!'—rumble, tumble, rush, cold air, shrieks, yells, etc."

That was the last service Compton was able to render brother Charles as a schoolboy. In the spring of 1827, the latter being just thirteen, Compton ceased to be a schoolboy altogether, and his younger brother remained under the care and tuition of Mr. Hearn till he was turned fifteen. By then it was judged, not unadvisedly, that he had sucked his master's brains dry, and accordingly he was removed to finish his school career under a Mr. Durham, who enjoyed the reputation of being alike a brilliant scholar and one capable of running his pupils successfully for scholarships at the University. The Squire of Ipsden, having himself done nothing better than spend money at Oriel, had imbibed a prejudice against Oxford; but he yielded to his wife's wish, that their youngest and clever son should make the experiment of an academical career, provided that he could carry off a scholarship.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEMYSHIP EXAMINATION.

IN the year of grace 1831, the University of Oxford, like the public services, was manipulable by persons possessing that undefined yet potential leverage, interest. A man might obtain a scholarship, a fellowship, a headship, or professorship with little more than a smattering of classics or mathematics, while the highest proficiency in the subjects recognized in the schools did not absolutely insure any participation in the endowments of the wealthy corporation or its component colleges. At the same time, popular opinion, both in the University and out of doors, was tending in a direction adverse to this corrupt system. Oriel had set a noble example by throwing open her Fellowships to the world, her immediate reward being the aggregation of the grandest minds of Oxford, perhaps we might say of the nation, within her common room. - Cardinal Newman, Keble and Clough, Whately and Arnold, were all Fellows of this famous college, whose initiative Balliol, with splendid success, was soon to follow. The colleges least influenced by what may be termed the Oriel spirit were Magdalen, New College, and St. John's, and it was with the first-named of this trio, the most beautiful of all collegiate institutions, that Charles Reade was destined to ally his name.

Ipsden being situated but seventeen miles from the great academic city, and its hospitality as large and generous as its

tone was intellectual, had become by no means a *terra incognita* to the Oxford dons. Plumptre, Master of University, a gentleman of ancestry and culture, was an ever-acceptable guest at Ipsden House. Dr. Macbride, Principal of Magdalen Hall, then a kind of parasite of the great college, forming as it did an angle of its pile of buildings, was Mrs. Reade's dearest male friend—the good lady boasted such a multitude of dearest friends of her own sex that it was impossible to compare her superlatives. He was learned, evangelical, benevolent, courtly, and, though a Scotchman, exhibited not the slightest trace of his nationality, if we except a ceaseless industry. Dr. Ellerton, Fellow of Magdalen, was another acquaintance, as also Mr.—nicknamed Corporal—Dornford, Fellow of Oriel, who would have married Julia Reade if the fates had been propitious. Mrs. Reade, therefore, in virtue of an admirable *cuisine*, enjoyed a plethora of the sort of interest which hospitality commands.

Possibly it may have been Dr. Macbride, possibly Dr. Ellerton, who suggested that Mr. Durham's promising pupil should stand for a Demyskip at Magdalen. It was rather of the nature of shooting an arrow into the air, for, bar Dr. Ellerton, Mrs. Reade had no string to her bow within Waynflete's college. Dr. Martin Joseph Routh, at that epoch President, and one of the most learned men in the University, who managed to hang on to this mortal coil for ninety-nine years and three months, was a High-Churchman, and that, too, at a period when high-churchmanship was scarcely even invented. Consequently, to Ipsden he was very much anathema, and doubly so, since he did not care to preserve amicable relations with his next door neighbor, *ce cher* Dr. Macbride. Looking back, one almost wonders how it came to pass that Charles

Reade, a youth of seventeen, was run for a Magdalen Demyship in the teeth of probability. True, a Reade four centuries back had given the stone whereof the college was built. That, however, was rather a statute-run obligation, and one which the Fellows would have encountered with a sneer had it been put forward as an excuse. Gratitude is hardly the virtue which abounds most in college common rooms, and the fact of Sir Edmund Rede of Boarstal having virtually built the tenement they inhabited would be one they might by no means relish being flung at them. In fine, but for the chapter of accidents, Charles Reade would never have been Demy or Fellow of Magdalen.

The college at that period had preserved the main outlines prescribed by its pious founder, William of Waynflete, Lord Chancellor to King Henry VI. and Bishop of Winchester. Its rule was relaxed—that of course. There was no mass, no fasts, no prelections in the college hall, nothing, in short, either Roman or Catholic; while if, as was the case, the Fellows were bound to celibacy, the president and chaplains were permitted the luxury of the matrimonial state. The revenues of the college, derivable from lands in London, Hants, Lincolnshire, Oxon, and other shires, amounted to about twenty-four thousand pounds per annum, of which grand total President Routh absorbed for his own share one sixth, the balance being distributed — on very uneven lines — among forty Fellows, thirty Demies, twelve Chaplains and Clerks, sixteen Choristers, an Organist, a Schoolmaster and Usher, a Steward, and several Incumbents who were made comfortable for life at the college expense, in consideration of having formerly been Fellows. Needless to add, the forty Fellows, as the ruling body, appropriated for their own use the lion's share, the

Seniors being tenaciously careful of their own interests, so that the Demies and other Foundation members received little more than a small pittance. A Demyship, however, had a relative value, in that it led to a Fellowship. The Founder provided that his Fellowships should be restricted to the natives of certain counties and dioceses, parcelling out these preferred geographical areas among the forty Fellows. Thus, for example, three of his Fellows were to be born in Oxfordshire, but one only in Kent; Lincolnshire, his birthplace, and the Diocese of Winton being especially favored. Anybody born in any one of these selected shires and dioceses was eligible for a Demyship, but after election he had to wait till a Fellow on his county or diocese took a living, married, came into a fortune in land, or died. He would then, if he had taken his B.A. degree, succeed *de jure*, but subject to one condition. There were to be two medical and three law Fellows, and thus a Demy might be required, owing to the Fellow he succeeded being a doctor or lawyer, to embrace one or other of these professions, or to lose his Fellowship. Sometimes a Demy waited for a vacancy for ten, twenty, thirty, or more years, and cases have occurred of men living and dying as Demies at a green old age, owing to the longevity of the Fellow for whose shoes they were waiting. A Demyship, however, was the first step, and the Fellows coveted that appointment for their relatives.

This brings us to the consideration of how these scholarships—for such they ranked academically—were bestowed. There was, we may remark *in limine*, no nonsense of merit about them. From any such taint they were as free as the most noble Order of the Garter. There numbered, as has been said, thirty Demies, and, taking one year with another, there were from four to five vacancies to be filled

up on St. Mary Magdalen's Festival, viz., July 22. The *Times* and other papers duly notified the fact that on that day so many Demies would be elected. From this you might suppose that competition was invited, and that the examination would decide the successful candidates. Not so. The new Demies were nominated by the college officers, and the college officers, with the exception of the president, changed each 2d of February in every year; "the end of all things" the day was in consequence nicknamed. These college officers, need it be related, were selected from the list of Fellows in rotation, and each Fellow served his turn for each office when his year came round. The list was as follows: President, Vice-President, Dean of Divinity, Senior Dean of Arts, Junior Dean of Arts, Senior Lursar, Riding Bursar, and Junior Bursar. Oddly enough, the college tutors were not considered officers at all unless they chanced to fill for the year one of the above-mentioned posts, the real value of which consisted in the probability of its holder having the privilege of nominating a Demy—in other words, of bestowing on a relative an income for life, provided the recipient avoided the fatal noose of matrimony; at all events, until such time as he obtained a college living. If, therefore, there were four vacancies, the President, Vice-President, Dean of Divinity, and Senior Dean of Arts had each a Demyship to give away. If eight vacancies, then each of the college officers enjoyed the same privilege; but if one only, then the President alone appointed. It was whispered that President Routh selected the best candidate who offered himself, and this may have been the case at times, but as a rule the one supreme merit in the venerable old gentleman's eyes consisted in being the grandson of some one of his friends of by-gone years. It happened, however, that he

kept an eagle eye on the papers of the several candidates, and when a youth conspicuously failed, intimated to the particular Fellow who contemplated appointing him that he should oppose his nomination. It was only in the event of a complete fiasco that Dr. Routh took this decided line; more often, when dissatisfied, he would allow the nomination to pass, but remark sarcastically, "Your nominee, sir, may be a very excellent young man, but he is no scholar." In 1831 the example of Oriel had decidedly affected the Magdalen common room, and the tutors would, if they could, have abolished the nomination system in favor of pure merit. It is necessary, at the risk of weariness, to particularize these details, because without them the election of Charles Reade would be misunderstood. It has all along been imagined that he owed his Fellowship to a nomination as Demy. This is an error. Merit brought him into the college, not favor. He was indebted for his fifty years of Fellowship and four years of Demyship to no human being save Charles Reade. True, had Dr. Ellerton been one of the college officers for the year, it is possible that he might have nominated the talented son of his friend, Mrs. Reade of Ipsden. He was not, however, destined to render her this signal service.

The election was one of those jobs that are neatly managed. It was assumed that any candidate could write an English essay respectably, and thereupon this was made the *pièce de résistance* of the *menu*. Many an ignoramus justified the distich—

"And native cheek, when facts were weak,
Bore him in triumph through."

It happened, however, on this eventful occasion, that among the total of candidates was one born essayist, a

youth who already could wield his pen epigrammatically. His scholarship was average, though not brilliant, but his English coruscated. The shades of Addison and Gibbon seemed to inspire him. Noctes Ambrosian Wilson, alias Christopher North, who had just left the college, cast his mantle upon him, and Collins, the college singer, imparted a spice of his poesy to the candidate's pages. Mills vowed that Charles Reade's essay gave evidence of absolute talent. Old Dr. Routh read it from end to end, and smiled the approval of an octogenarian. For all that, the best man in would have been passed over infallibly—as had been the case before half a hundred times at least—but for the lucky accident that one of the designate nominees so completely failed all along the line that President Routh put his foot down and declared with emphasis that he would not consent to the nomination of an absolute dunce.

That gave Charles Reade his chance. He was *facile princeps* among all the candidates, the only one who had risen above mediocrity. Mills, the tutor, spoke up for him right manfully. The subject of the English essay was, "How far is Ambition productive of Virtue?" To a man, the other candidates, imagining the college expected them to glorify Uriah Heepishness, proceeded on the old trite track to decry ambition as one of the devastating forces of humanity. Charles Reade, however, being himself wildly ambitious, was not so canting a hypocrite as to abuse a quality he admired intensely. He took pen and wrote *con brio*, yet judgmatically, his ideas. In barbarous days, he affirmed, when war is the only outlet for ambition, ambition showed to the greatest disadvantage as being pure selfishness. But whatever might be said against military ambition had been said already, and to the domain of learning and the arts these censures were quite inapplicable.

Without ambition as a motive power, he contended, there would be no excellence, nothing but a dead level of mediocrity; and he went on to remark, incidentally, that all academic successes were in reality the triumphs of an honorable ambition. Further, he argued that the sole alternative of ambition would be a chaotic stagnation of all the mental faculties; and, in brief, his peroration was the warmest eulogium of the very quality which the other candidates had been gibbeting as the meanest of vices. The effect of this incisive honesty on the mind of a scholar who was revered by his contemporaries, including, *inter alios*, Lord Selborne, as a man of genius and conscience, the tutor Mills, was almost electrical. "Good heavens!" the candidates overheard him exclaim in the ear of President Routh, "here is a boy who gives us his own ideas instead of other people's!" Better still, old Dr. Routh, after he had read the essay, endorsed his subordinate's verdict, and thus, as it were, by acclamation, Charles Reade was elected Demy of Magdalen.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDERGRADUATE LIFE.

LIFE in beautiful Magdalen during the years 1831-35 was about as agreeable as it is well possible to conceive. There were at least twenty out of the forty Fellows in residence, and the high table at the dinner hour was the best filled in the College Hall. The senior was old Dr. Ellerton, the next Dr. Daubeny, chemist, botanist, atomic theorist, and in after-days President of the Royal Society; the third, Mr. Edwards, who was mathematical tutor, and the most dignified and courteous of dons. Mills was the leading tutor; but on the day that Charles Reade was admitted Demy a certain Mr. Robert Lowe, of University, was elected probationer Fellow, and this gentleman, subsequently Chancellor of the Exchequer and Viscount Sherbrooke, became his private tutor. As might be expected, the college was by no means rich in celebrities. Lord Rosse, the astronomer, had as Lord Oxmantown been gentleman commoner; Philpotts, Bishop of Exeter, was on the list of ex-Fellows; and President Routh had earned the appreciation of German students of theology. Mr. Lowe, however, and Roundell Palmer were as yet unknown beyond the confines of Oxford, and Mozley, afterwards Regius Professor of Divinity, an enlightened theologian, did not enter the college till about the date of Charles Reade's graduation. Among his contemporaries were Lord Winmarleigh and Mr. Thomas Chamberlayne,

the distinguished yachtsman, who were Gentlemen-Commoners; President Bulley, his senior three years, but his constant friend; Bernard Smith, his chief ally, who afterwards joined the Roman Communion and became a canon; Henderson, Dean of Carlisle; Dr. Newman, the Squire of Nelmes, whose eccentricities were for many years the talk of Oxford; Dr. Fisher, the present Senior Fellow; and Dr. Bloxam, the antiquarian, for whom he maintained the greatest regard. Goldwin Smith and John Conington were later importations.

Those unacquainted with the glories of Magdalen it may be advisable to refer to Macaulay's magnificent description. Since 1831 the College has changed architecturally as otherwise. A new block of buildings faces the High Street, and covers the site of old Magdalen Hall, which, with the exception of a picturesque turret still remaining, was destroyed by fire. A very handsome school-room occupies the southwest angle of the college buildings, and the eastern side of the Chaplain's Quadrangle was rebuilt in 1854. Not only has the venerable Jacobean portal, through which Charles Reade passed to become Demy, disappeared, but also its successor, a well-meant but ill-executed gateway, designed by the elder Pugin. In the deer-park quite half the Caroline elms of 1831 have succumbed to wind and weather; the chapel has undergone a *quasi* restoration by Cottingham; the old organ is no more, but has found a magnificent successor by Messrs. Gray and Davison; the Founder's Chambers and Tower have been restored by Sir G. Scott. To-day the college is crammed to suffocation with undergraduates, and its President is more than seventy years younger than was Martin Joseph Routh, when he passed away on Christmas Eve, 1854. On the whole, however, the Magdalen of

1831 was a far more charming home than is the Magdalen of 1886. The twenty resident Fellows inhabited the senior common room, and interfered but little with the Gentleman-Commoners and Demies, both of which orders enjoyed their own common room, with a superb cellar of wine, service of plate, and other luxuries. Lectures were few and almost optional. A meet of the hounds afforded an ample excuse for absence; and as there were only two examinations to be passed in a period of four years' residence, the Demies had no cause to weary themselves with books. At Oxford every one, except, perhaps, the purely betting and equine men, reads more or less; but reading to suit one's bent is one thing, and reading against the grain another. A distinguished Fellow of the college has narrated concerning Charles Reade that he did not take much interest in the studies of the place, and hence—the *sequitur* seems rather a negative one—no one suspected that he would ever obtain distinction as an author. That, of course, expresses with precision the strong academic prejudice in favor of grooves. The ordinary Oxonian of academical eminence believes, *ab imo corde*, in the virtue of absorbing the thoughts of the great minds of the past, more especially when those thoughts happen to have taken a purely pedantic and technical shape, and, *pari passu*, disbelieves in a man of brains thinking his own thoughts. It was enough for the dons of 1831 that a student should write Ciceronian prose and Ovidian verse, know the Aristotelian Ethics by heart, and be able to give the date of the battle of Marathon. To have gorged all that involved capacity; and as for originality, it was outside the calculation. Consequently, when a youth with a natural detestation of grooves of all sorts came to Magdalen, his superiors and equals in the College alike failed to make

him out. He neglected his lectures; he played the fiddle; he wore long curls; he footed the double shuffle like a professional, for in spite of an ugly rolling gait he was a perfect dancer, and thought fit to select the egg-shaped dining-table at Ipsden for Terpsichorean performances to his own accompaniment on the violin—much to the Squire's horror. His raiment was by no means of the subfuse hue enjoined by the statutes, but rather of the picturesque variety. Moreover, oddly enough, this rather eccentric Demy failed to appreciate the excellent cellar of the Demies' common room, having, in fact, a rooted aversion to wine and a positive detestation of beer. Added to which he evinced some sort of preference for the College Choir, and invited one of the leading singers over to Ipsden—a *coup manqué*, for his father, on learning that the pretty boy, with the voice of a cherub, was the son of a tradesman, promptly packed him off to Oxford. But though not industrious on academic lines, he read voraciously. Oxford is a city of books, of books of every conceivable description, and the future author was thereby enabled to assimilate all the fiction and all the dramas of the past three centuries. Thus he began, while yet but little more than a big boy, to cultivate an innate dramatic talent. Those who in after-years were astonished at his rare ability as a stage-manager, little suspected that some half a century before they knew him he was actually practising parts before the looking-glass. His mother meant him to be a divine, a bishop perhaps. The hen, too, has no idea when she takes her brood of ducklings to the edge of a pond, just to sip the water, that these young termagants will swim away from her. They had got a duckling instead of a cockrell in Magdalen, and neither Mills's fascinating presence nor Mr. Lowe's splendid coach-

ing could keep him to strictly farmyard lines. While they were explaining the Platonic idea, or discussing the obscure renderings in the choruses of Agamemnon, their pupil's mind was immersed in the contemplation of some ideal Peg Woffington. Yet he did not altogether neglect his pastors and masters. Perhaps he took in about half of what they said, perhaps even more. Neither did he cut his classics or logic; on the contrary, he treated them as very deserving *parerga*. They were not the business of his life, nor ever could be, but in so far as they touched on the drama they excited his admiration. Besides which he had *de rigueur* to pass, with or without honors, otherwise he would lose his Fellowship—a serious calamity to a younger son, whose father's estate was entailed. He read, therefore, but reserved his hard work for subjects with which he had positive affinity.

The two contemporaries at Oxford whom he most admired were Roundell Palmer, who had carried everything before him as Scholar of Trinity, and Stanley of Balliol, known afterwards as Dean Stanley. With the first, who was Fellow of Magdalen, he had barely an acquaintance; the latter he never knew at all. Both were, unlike him, intensely, exclusively academical, the essential products of Oxford; yet though the difference between their aims and method was so radical, he revered each as a man of commanding talent. From their point of view he was no student, but, if so, they judged him erroneously. He was certainly never a student in the fields where they obtained proficiency, yet in his own domain, as all who knew him will testify, he was a lifelong student, and his labor had its commencement during the uneventful four years when he was Demy of Magdalen.

His contemporaries—those, that is to say, of his under-

graduate days—have mostly passed away, and it is difficult to form an accurate impression of that period of his life. It has been hinted that he was never very popular with the Demies' common room. He could not, as has been said, appreciate their port. His manner was individual and unsympathetic; he cared less than little for college gossip or college jokes. Newman amused him, but only as a polished buffoon. One or two of the others he did not consider gentlemen—an unpardonable sin in his eyes at that time of his life. It was Bernard Smith for whom he cherished a sincere affection, and afterwards he was positively chagrined when his friend elected to merge himself in the Church of Rome, and not only so, but to embrace Roman orders. He always spoke of that gentleman as of a brother whom he had lost by the sort of misadventure which he could neither comprehend nor quite tolerate. He had been imbued with Protestant ideas. His pet divine, Chillingworth, was the author of a trite but ill-worded aphorism concerning the Bible and the Bible only, and he could quite understand any belief under the sun—or absolute negation—except Popery. Perhaps not a little of his acerbity towards all things Papistical, a sentiment which he tried to veil in "The Cloister and the Hearth," may be referred to spleen at losing the society, if not the friendship, of Bernard Smith.

He was a warm adherent of the Union, then located over the shop of the bibliopole Vincent in the centre of the High Street, a situation far more convenient for Magdalen men than remote New Inn Hall Lane. The old Union rooms were very snug, and when the other Demies were imbibing the vintages of Oporto and Xeres in their common room, Charles Reade might have been found at the Union, drinking in greedily the literature of what was

even then one of the best modern libraries in Europe. He was educating himself, and though doubtless people voted him a lazy, unsociable member of a small but fraternal society, was following his destiny. His inability to assimilate with anybody and everybody was set down to the score of pride. His election as Demy had been informally protested against by one of the senior Fellows, on the ground that the Founder's Statutes enacted that the Demies should be "poor scholars," whereas he was the son of a man of ancestry and estate. It is possible, therefore, that his avoidance of the social life of Magdalen may have been misinterpreted. At that time of day the common room was the sole rendezvous for the gentlemen of the college. There were no cricket matches, no racing-boats, no athletics, no fives or rackets. There was the hunting-field, pigeon-shooting, and netting the rivers, but, so far as amusement went, the fast men rode and drove, while the slow men trudged diurnal constitucionals along the different roads. At Magdalen there were seldom more than twenty undergraduates in residence, and the traditions of the college almost forbade association with out-college men. With its faults and virtues Magdalen kept to itself rigorously, and when a distant cousin who was in residence at Wadham invited Charles Reade to dinner, and introduced him to his friends—very nice, gentlemanly fellows he described them afterwards, as no doubt was the case—he was chagrined and surprised beyond expression to find that the Magdalen Demy, while willing to recognize a relation belonging to another college, positively declined the acquaintance of Wadham as a society on any terms. To reveal an open secret, the Magdalen Demies were by no means ambitious of the company of strangers, except on rare occasions. They formed a very pleasant little coterie

of their own, and disliked its being disturbed. We mention this fact, because it demonstrates clearly and accounts for the small influence exercised by Oxford on the mind and temperament of Charles Reade. He became a privileged member of a small and exclusive college. With his contemporaries within that narrow circle he had few affinities, and did not harmonize; consequently, he lived his own life, and preserved his very distinct individuality unimpaired. It was the bitter complaint of a brilliant Magdalen man in after-years against Oxford, that he had come to it inspired, and left it flattened to the dead level of a mediocere average. That student, however, entered vigorously and industriously into the studies of the place. He read for his first, and his mind passed through a severe training, from which it emerged, as he put it, a wreck. Not so Charles Reade. He touched academic Oxford with the tips of his fingers. He was moulded neither by the lecture-room, the midnight oil, nor the common room. He brought to Magdalen HIMSELF, and the college doubtless assisted his brain to develop. But it did not spoil him, or pare off those angles which were, perhaps, as the crystals on the rock, the most valuable portions of his nature. Had he been sent to Eton or Harrow, he might have learned to be polished and commonplace; had fate consigned him to Balliol he might have adorned the first class, and become Lord Chancellor, for he had the head of a lawyer. He was destined for something less ephemeral. Lord Brougham is reported to have said that he would rather have written "Pickwick" than have been raised to the woolsack; and, if we may say so inoffensively, Lord Selborne, Charles Reade's most illustrious contemporary among the Magdalen Fellows, who absorbed all the honors that Oxford and Winchester had to offer, and attained

the highest apex of a lawyer's ambition, will be forgotten when "Masks and Faces" is remembered and played, and its author's name is held in veneration. That is, perhaps, a humiliating reflection for the worshippers of divine average, who believe that labor and talent transcend genius. Time, however, shall be the test, and if the author fails to survive the Lord Chancellor, his authorship will be at fault, for it is genius alone which attains to that happiness which Solon affirmed would not commence until after death—the happiness of literary immortality. We venture to prophesy that it will be a long day before a Magdalen brain shall conceive another Triplet, or create such a climax as the Picture Scene. Unless mankind changes fundamentally, this glorious literary achievement must be rated higher than prize poems, prize essays, scholarships, and all the first-class degrees that ever have gilded pretentious mediocrity. On the contrary, our conviction remains that, with the spread of education, the wide world of thought and reading will command the mere successful plodders to take off their hats in the presence of genius.

Qui vivra, verra!

CHAPTER VIII.

ELECTED FELLOW.

CHARLES READE'S four years of life as an undergraduate Demy of Magdalen were, as he himself phrased it, uneventful. He sucked the brains of Mr. Robert Lowe and Mr. Mills, as well as the shelves of the Union Society. He acquired a smattering of music, and learned to sing songs, both sentimental and comic, *malgré* a rather throaty voice. He picked up a local musician, who inspired him with something approximating enthusiasm for the violin. Although cricket at the time was almost an unknown game in the University, he practised batting against the local professionals to such purpose that ten years after he knocked the giant, Alfred Mynn, round the field at Liverpool. His contemporaries voted him an eccentric, but yielded his intellect homage. His long curls were incomprehensible, so were his ideas. Men could not quite understand how it came to pass that a youngster who could acquire knowledge without an effort, and might have figured in the first class, deliberately preferred fiddling and dancing to Aristotle and Plato. Plodding industry, of which there was a stratum among the Demies, took offence, and indolent stupidity was envious. In the end both orders of student agreed to vote him a mystery. He was not of their sort, and they assumed that he was destined to mount to the skies or go to the dogs, probably the latter. President Routh, however, held him in the highest

estimation. Mills, the light of the college, appraised him as a youth of genius, and he gained the regard of another whose insight into character was throughout his brilliant career more than remarkable.

Samuel Wilberforce had left Oriel disappointed, married Miss Serjeant, and, having taken Holy Orders, had accepted the curacy of Checkenden—the Chalken Dene. The Ipsden estate runs into Checkenden parish, so John Reade, who had known him from a boy, was the future bishop's squire. Samuel Wilberforce, as is generally known, was a skilful rider and an ardent lover of horse-flesh, and he doubtless, as a young curate, was not a little gratified when the Squire placed his stable at his disposal, subject to one condition, that he would never keep the horses waiting, a rule not always observed, the neglect of which, too, evoked the smart censure of Mr. John Reade, and very nearly led to a rupture of their friendly relations. Mrs. Reade also was unvaryingly courteous and kindly to the interesting curate and his beautiful but delicate wife, and the cordial relations then established terminated only with her death. It was almost inevitable, therefore, that the promising Demy of Magdalen should in the vacations be brought into social relations with a clergyman who was a neighbor and a man of brains. As a matter of fact, Samuel Wilberforce affected a curious interest in the young Oxonian. He took a rapid and accurate survey of his capacity, and they might—in spite of the slight disparity of age—have become friends had they possessed more in common. As it was, they never, in spite of the embryo bishop's chilly advances, quite found a middle term; indeed, from first to last, with very few exceptions, Charles Reade fought shy of clergymen. Possibly the social life of Ipsden may have created this antipathy.

Mrs. Reade was perpetually cultivating bishops, dons, and professors. Her brother-in-law, George Stanley Faber, was revered by her as a sort of deity, though his manners were peculiar and his pronunciation unutterable Yorkshire. His nephew, who rendered the name of Faber forever illustrious, was as Fellow of University a *persona grata* at Ipsden, until he ventured, in defiance of his uncle—who styled him invariably in common conversation “that *uss* (ass) *mai* nephew”—to pose as Tractarian, and afterwards to follow Cardinal Newman across the Rubicon. Then there were the Oxford dons, who came to Ipsden partly to air their importance, and still more to partake of its hospitality; and the local clergy, who courted the lady of the open house, and *en revanche* tried, not always successfully, to snub the son. It was perhaps not a matter for wonderment that this same son imbibed a distaste for clerics and ecclesiasticism.

Yet there was never a rule without an exception. Among the divines specially affected by his mother was Pearson, Dean of Salisbury. That eminent ecclesiastic had two clerical sons, whereof the elder, Charles, became afterwards Rector of Knebworth, by favor of Lord Lytton. This gentleman was a frequent visitor at Ipsden, and though by quite five years the senior of Charles Reade, cultivated his acquaintance, and in after-years persuaded him to become his frequent guest. He was of all clerics the most frigid and unsympathetic, but withal thoughtful and reticent—qualities a writer would naturally prefer to garrulity. To the last he was Charles Reade’s chief clerical friend, a condition which would have been impossible had they not assimilated in the days of youth and buoyancy.

The period of undergraduate existence passed smoothly,

and ended, if dramatically, none the less propitiously. As has been stated, the rule of the college was that a Demy succeeded only to a Fellowship on his particular county, and also on the express condition that he had, previously to the next ensuing St. Mary Magdalen's day after the vacancy occurred, taken his degree. In the early summer of 1835, when Charles Reade was of sufficient academic standing to graduate, having been four years in residence, such a vacancy occurred quite unexpectedly on his county—Oxfordshire. As it happened, however, he was not prepared for his great-go, the chief examination, and yet his chances of a fellowship hung upon his satisfying the examiners. Never was there so grave, so painful, so critical a dilemma! He had purposed to defer the ordeal until after the long vacation; and yet his whole future turned on his scraping through an examination for which he had only read in a desultory sort of fashion. It was June, and he had, at a day's notice, to enter his name on one of two lists—either that of pass-men, or of those *qui honores ambiunt*, i.e., intending honor-men. The regulations then prescribed that the pass-men were examined *first*, and disposed of for good or evil. This occupied about three weeks, after which the honor examination commenced. Now, if Charles Reade had put down his name for a pass, he would have had at once to submit to the ordeal of paper-work, and in all human probability would have secured an inevitable rejection. He could not master his books in a few hours, and though the pass examination was light and easy as compared with that for honors, still ignorance of the authors offered would not have been excused. Consequently there was no hope for it but in a bold stroke, and with the bait before him of a provision for life our author did not hesitate. He entered his name as a candi-

date for honors, went back to his rooms, and set to work manfully to lick his chaotic reading of the past few years into shape. His wildest ambition was to be gulfed, *i. e.*, reduced to the level of a simple pass, yet awarded a testamur. Were he, however, to break down absolutely in any one subject, even this latitude would be denied him. His task seemed simply impossible, and wiseacres prophesied the Nemesis of fiddling and dancing. Night and day, day and night, with bare intervals for food and sleep, the youngster of brain-power and singular concentration stuck to his books. He had to carry the Ethics, in Greek as well as English, in his head; to translate respectably so many plays of Æschylus; to remember the text and matter of Thucydides and Herodotus; to render Cicero with Addisonian English, and Addison into Ciceronian Latin; to write disquisitions on mental and moral philosophy, as well as on ancient history; to play at versifying in Latin and Greek; and to give an analysis of Anglican theology, with Bible history *plus* Logic. But that was not all. The University in its wisdom had decreed that each candidate should repeat by heart such selections from the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion in the Latin version as the examiners might require. This amounted to a parrot-like exercise, and the examinees usually deferred committing such dry matter to memory until the last few days before the schools. It was considered a sort of humane knight-service for a man's friends to take him round the college walks—three quarters of a mile—and cause him to repeat these thirty-nine symbols to friendly prompting. The article on Predestination, being the most prolix, was the biggest fence to be surmounted, and examiners of a malicious turn were suspected of an undue preference for that crabbed piece of Latinity. All prudent men, not-

withstanding, while devoting especial attention to the *Articulus de Predestinatione*, gorged also the rest. There was then, as now, no accounting for the caprices of examiners, and a man who knew thirty-eight articles by rote, so as to be able to repeat them verbatim without blinking, might be ruthlessly rejected for his ignorance of the thirty-ninth.

Charles Reade, following in this particular the multitude to do evil, procrastinated. This was unwise, for he would be allowed errors in his ethics or plays, but not, by a silly paradox, in the all-precious Thirty-nine Articles. Hence, when, thirty-six hours before the examination, he began to repeat these forty-save-one tests of orthodoxy, memory, and scholarship—as the academic pundits imagined them to be—his friends, perceiving how hard he found it to learn by rote, began to prophesy his collapse. But the worst was to come. Although it was midsummer, the terrible strain of the past three weeks had affected his nerves. Neuralgia supervened, his face swelled, he was wracked with agony, and positively could not acquire the Thirty-nine Articles.

“I can say three of them,” he remarked sadly to a friend, as, swelled cheek and all, he marched off to the schools to face fate and the examiners. Slatter’s severity had sickened him of learning by heart, and, indeed, incapacitated him for an exercise wherein the stupidest are commonly the most proficient. But to learn against the grain, and with such pain as seemed to crush his very soul, that was impossible. Nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of every thousand, given such conditions, would have been asked any and every article except the aforesaid three. Charles Reade, however, was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Throughout he was nothing if not

the spoiled child of fortune. Incredible as it reads, it is none the less a positive fact, that he was required to repeat one of those magic three, and performed this *tour de force* with such *aplomb* as quite to satisfy his questioning Minos, who at once vaulted to the conclusion that the Demy whose Fellowship hung in the balance had not failed to make quite sure of this petty test. Had he suspected that he was totally ignorant of thirty-six out of thirty-nine, the result would have been different, for at that time of day the reverence for oaths, subscriptions, *et id genus omne*, amounted to a fetish. "Will you," asked the Vice-Chancellor of Mr. Theodore Hook of St. Mary Hall, when that practical joker came up for matriculation, "subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, sir?" "Forty, if you wish it," was the glib response, and the extraordinary solemnity of this empty form was preserved up to the days of Dr. Cotton, who addressed boys from school as though they were Ordination Candidates, and the shibboleths they were ready to subscribe blindfold were safeguards against heresy. All that has been changed since those days. Boys are no longer expected to be theologians, nor St. Athanasius protected against the surreptitious Arianism of the playground. In 1835, however, everybody was expected to think in the same groove as his neighbor, whether cleric or lay, and it may consequently be recorded as a characteristic of the Oxford of that day that one of her most brilliant sons would have lost his fellowship but for, in plain English, a lucky fluke.

The aforesaid turn of the wheel saved him. His ethics were respectable; his plays at his fingers' ends; his logic mastered; his prose and verse fair; his essay, of course, brilliant. It was no question of plucking, still less of gulping, but rather of the class to which he was entitled

by virtue of an unequal, yet by no means incompetent, examination.

They gave him a third. That is to say, he took as good a degree as Cardinal Newman, Archbishop Thompson, and Regius Professor Mozley. Though only in the third class, his name stands forth as the most illustrious of the honor-men of that year, justifying, indeed, the trite paradox that the third class has beaten the first—in the race of life.

That sufficed. On July 22, 1835, he, as B.A., succeeded in due course to his Fellowship, his first year being, nominally, one of probation. He was only twenty-one, yet academically on the same plane with Doctor Daubeny, Roundell Palmer, and Robert Lowe. He elected to become a law Fellow, and prepared with that intent to enter at Lincoln's Inn, and after his probationer year—which entailed residence—at Magdalen was terminated, to eat his terms and be called to the bar. His brother Compton had married and become a limb of the law, and it was pre-supposed at Ipsden that the brothers would work together for their mutual advantage. It happened, however, that the younger of the two had other aims. The law was to be his parergon only, his ergon literature, albeit as yet neither he himself, nor his friends, nor his family imagined that fate had designated him for anything nobler than chambers, a horsehair wig, and perhaps a silk gown. His mother alone mentally predicted that he would be a second Sir Robert Reade, and add to the galaxy of family worthies the portrait of another Chief-Justice. Verily her charity was of that sort which believeth all things!

CHAPTER IX.

STUDIES LAW.

HAVING attained the acme of most men's academical ambition, a Fellowship, and one too in the most beautiful and opulent of colleges, our author had the choice before him of three professions—the Bar, the Church, or Medicine. At the present moment a Fellow of Magdalen may be non-professional, a scholar *et præterea nihil*. Such, however, was not the intention of the pious and munificent Founder, who, being nothing if not priestly, imported a small element of jurisprudence and medicine into his college simply with the design of making his clerical Fellows in a small degree conversant with these two sciences. Waynflete has been accused of liberality, a compliment his Church would consider rather back-handed, because though he insisted on his foundation being monkish, he admitted within its bosom as lay monks a meagre half dozen amateur lawyers and doctors. A glance at his volume of statutes, with their elaborate regulations concerning the ritual of the chapel and his apparent indifference, so long as the ritual was performed in *sæcula sæculorum*, whether the number of the Fellows was few or many, would dispel this illusion. In 1835, when Charles Reade was elected probationer, the mediæval statutes, paradoxically enough in all respects except the performance of the Founder's favorite ritual, were in full force, and when Parliament subsequently did interfere, a cry of sacrilege

was raised from men who had never, and could never, obey the Founder's intentions even so far as to say mass for the repose of his soul, and for the souls of King Henry the Sixth, Sir Edmund Rede, Lord de Boarstal, and Sir John Falstaff. The College elevated the Founder's statutes into a matter of principle, because they wished to manipulate estates to suit their own convenience and enrich themselves individually. In those days, when a poor living fell vacant, it was raised to a thousand a year out of the moneys bequeathed by Waynflete for the maintenance of the Chaplains, Demies, and Clerks; and when a lease ran out, a heavy fine was exacted from the tenant in order to put ready money into the Fellows' pockets, the man thus mulcted becoming, however, virtually the owner of his tenure for a long term of years. In order to put a fair gloss on such very equivocal arrangements, the common room talked bombastically about the rights of the pious Founder, and the sin of traversing them; as though they had not been really abrogated ever since the Reformation, saving for three short weeks in the reign of James the Second, when the Protestant Foundation was expelled and Papists intruded! Looking back on the career of Charles Reade, it is tolerably evident that the Bar, as a profession, was to him valueless, indeed, it may have been detrimental, for it encouraged that spirit of litigiousness which at times almost embittered his existence. It was, however, forced upon him. The rod of Mr. Slatter, and the rather Puritanical simplicity of home, had caused a mind naturally religious to revolt from religion, at all events as exemplified by the section of the Church of England to which his mother was attached, albeit it is only fair to the Evangelicals of that day to add that he believed in them far more than in the port-imbibing High

Churchmen, who jobbed away the college property without conscience or decency. In fact, from the beginning to the end of the chapter, he was never quite a *persona grata* to the Fellows of Magdalen, and at the outset his unpopularity all but cost him his Fellowship.

The rule of the college was that a probationer fellow should reside during his year of probation, a regulation which lost a man a year at the Bar, since, not being a bird, he could hardly eat his dinners at Lincoln's Inn and pernoctate at Magdalen. The G. W. R. in those days was not in existence, and to cover a long fifty-six miles of road between dinner and bedtime every day would have been a feat alike expensive and fatiguing. Most lay Fellows found this period of penal residence a grievous infliction. Too young to enjoy either the port or the puns of the senior common room, too elastic to harmonize with men not merely their seniors, but too often prematurely senile owing to the subtle deterioration of lethargy and liquor, the probationer Fellows must have voted their Fellowship an illusion. Nothing to do and money to do it with is not an unmixed blessing, and certainly Charles Reade, a young man alike eupeptic, active, and adventurous, felt bored by his college, and out of tune with its lotus-eating ethics. The year, however, passed, and after that he was free to live where he liked. He must be called to the Bar, but need never hold a brief, and might refuse to hold office in the college when his turn came. His year of probation expired on June 22d, 1836, and he seems to have lost not a moment in commencing what was then supposed to be the business of his life. He entered at Lincoln's Inn in the November of that year. The subjoined epistle to his fond mother gives an idea of his earlier impressions, and at all events possesses the merit of being natural. It

is addressed from the chambers of Mr. Charles Waring Faber, B.C.L., of the Chancery Bar, the elder son of the prophetic Master of Sherburn Hospital, and his first cousin. Mr. Faber was a most charming and genial gentleman, who had taken honors at Oxford, was a model of industry, a professional diner-out in an age when conversation was cultivated as an adjunct of gastronomy, and a confirmed bachelor. He rose to a certain level in his profession, but never beyond it, and throughout his long and meritorious life played an unostentatiously charitable part. Few men gave away so liberally, and yet were so little accredited with generosity. He seems to have acted elder brother to Charles Reade at starting, and certainly they were cousinly friends to the end of the chapter.

The letter to Mrs. Reade runs thus :

12 KING'S BENCH WALK, TEMPLE, *November 12, 1836.*

“MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am at length initiated in these mysteries of Themis, and turned loose with my brain on—smoke, amidst the cabalistic wonders of the law’s glorious labyrinth. My companions have the start of me by six months of actual reading. I hope you opened Edward’s letter. There are one or two things in it that puzzle me: he insists upon my travelling, without telling me where I may get the means of so doing, and talks about my *academical fame* (!), warning me against resting satisfied with *that*, which ought to be but an earnest of my future career. Now I deprecate sincerely the latter part of this, *because* I assent so fully to the former. Mr. Warren has gone down to Cambridge for a day upon some business, and before he returns I hope to catch my comrades in the book we are studying: from what I see of the study, its natural effect upon the mind must be to improve the memory, and give a habit of attention and strict accuracy—for every particular word in every individual sentence has a meaning which may be of very vital importance, so that you soon learn that it is not enough to glance your eye over the propositions and possess yourself of their general meaning. I am in C. F.’s (Charles Faber’s) rooms, and shall not quit them immediately, as I have been at the expense of buying keys. I am waiting too to see whether you come to town or not.

Compton sent down a letter containing a draft, though I had told him I was about to return, but, *n'importe*, I received it to-day, and it is of no use to me till the 24th. I shall go and call on the Shepherds and Anderdons next week, D.V., if I can find them. It is getting so dark that I, having no candle, must conclude, with a promise to write better next time.

"Your affectionate son,

CHARLES READE.

"Saturday Eve.

"P. S.—I think Norfolk Street may very likely be my habitation, where the lodgings are good and cheap. I am determined to get to the bottom of the Snow mystery to-morrow, by the aid of the pew-opener."

This last sentence constitutes in itself a mystery not destined to be unravelled. There was a family of the name of Snow at Bibury, near Sir John Reade's residence, on the borders of Gloucestershire, who were interested in the ill-starred banking firm of Strahan, Paul, & Bates, but whether the party named Snow here darkly alluded to was one of the Gloucestershire Snows must remain the subject of conjecture.

Within three weeks from the date of the above letter to his mother there followed one to his father, redolent of the pedantry of Oxford, and written in so artificial a style as to be almost ludicrous. In addressing "My dear Father" the youngest son adopts the distant attitude of the diplomatist. It is not indeed a letter at all, but a formal essay, inspired partly by Addison's *Walk* and Sir Roger de Coverley, partly by the Aldrich, Aristotle, and Plato lectures of his college, and emanating in no sense from himself. One can but smile as one reads how the junior Fellow suggests that his sire should begin by defining happiness. This alone brings back the jargon of the lecture-room, so stereotyped that the same words, the same phrases and illustrations, were passed on from tutor to pupil, and when the pupil became tutor, he in turn passed it on to

other pupils. The conclusion, by-the-bye, reminds us of the juvenile town-mouse inviting the venerable country-mouse to pay a visit to the urban granaries. Doubtless the old Squire was tempted by this picture to emerge from the solitude of Ipsden. Some four years later he actually did descend on the metropolis to see the young Queen open Parliament. It was cold, and the Squire not only surmounted himself with two great-coats, but also with a huge cloak. Underneath four garments, therefore, and in the fob of his trousers was his watch, and in the breast-pocket of coat number one, his purse. The crush to see the show was so great that the party could not drive up to the rooms in Palace Yard, where they had secured seats, but had to walk some two hundred yards along the pavement. This proceeding took about twenty minutes, during which brief period the Squire was relieved of his purse. One would have imagined that he would have been indignant. Not so. The old gentleman, chairman, by-the-bye, of the Henley Petty Sessions, was vexed, but quite for another cause. It was because he could not discover the thief. "I profess," he said, "that this must be the identical thief who robbed me twenty years ago. No one else could have been so adroit. If I could find the fellow, I'd give him a ten-pound note for his cleverness." And this was not affectation. The fine old gentleman resembled his son Charles in that he positively revelled in a startling paradox. The following is the epistle to which we refer. It is under date of November 26, 1836.

"89 CHANCERY LANE.

"MY DEAR FATHER,—The most ancient strife that ever I heard of is the war between wave and rock upon the Shore of River or Sea, so often commemorated by Poets of every class; but next to this I think (for it is a rivalry many hundred years old) is the competition between Town and

Country, each of which, as heretofore, still claims for itself to be called the dwelling-place of human happiness; and, hacked as they have been by so long a warfare, both still employ the weapons which gleaned in their very first encounter. Intellectual improvement is pitted against Health, 'prime blessing of all,' 'Wit' on the one hand is met by 'Innocence' on the other; and if this competition advances with the promise of pleasures glowing, keen, and various, the other is not backward to proffer such as are less apt to be followed by pain and regret: these are the old topics, to which I add a less common item of comparison, viz., that in the Country there are fewer tempters and temptations in the week; in the Town more Jeremiahs to thunder over your conscience on the Sabbath. He who would decide this question, with mankind taken generally for its subject, must begin with settling the definition of earthly happiness and the means of acquiring and keeping it, points of discussion which, after severely trying the wisdom of the Ancient World, were by it left undecided; or else he must approach the discussion in that noble spirit of self-confidence which foreruns a notable disgrace almost invariably; but, if you put commonplace people out of consideration, the difficulty in my mind is diminished by $\frac{4}{5}$ ths, or, rather, $\frac{99}{100}$ ths, which I believe is about the proportion of Men of Ability to the Mass: in the Country the intellects of Men are stagnant and putrescent, they dawdle in their thinking as they do in everything else: an hour and a half at a meal, three hours and a quarter consumed in a ride of twelve or thirteen miles, and after dinner the hours they sit with little or hardly any interchange of thought, and then after tea they go to bed and pass the night in a weakly sleep, as they did the day in an unrefreshing doze. Here a man so clearly sees, by looking out of a window for 10 seconds, that if he dawdles he will be distanced, that he cannot help shaking himself. Then the information which one imbibes almost involuntarily at every pore merely by being in the Metropolis! I have observed at Oxford that if we entertained at our table a Metropolitan, he was sure, if conversable, to be the star of the company: in that very common topic, Politics, he was sure to be very superior because he knew a number of matters such as either slowly or not at all travel into the country, but which throw a light upon the state and intention of parties; he had picked up some little things the editors of newspapers did not know or had not the wit to think important: he had been present and heard the Speech in question and begged leave to correct *The Standard*, which he thought he could with the more effect if he just hinted at a theory that paper wished to establish, by misrepresentation, if no other way

appeared. Londoner—‘Mrs. Norton has a poem in the press, Lady S. a novel which she has paid H——d a hundred pounds to puff in *The Quarterly*, and Galt has a rival “Curiosities of Literature” to D’Israeli’s coming out.’ Country M.—‘You don’t say so! Why, I have seen in none of the Litera— L.—‘No, I dare say not, but though I am not a literary man I generally hear what is going on, whether I will or no, from some friend who writes in the Reviews or from literary gossips of one kind or another, a long time before the Newspapers are told.’ In this way a Duncce from London attracts and deserves a certain degree of respect: London the Focus of Intellect and virtue, the very heart of this great kingdom, the seat of legislature, the Throne of Pleasure, the place where everything that affects the condition of Britain seems to begin—Opinion, fashion, luxury, comfort, knowledge, Law. If I had not been an Egotistical dog, my dear father, I should have told you in fewer words that I am satisfied with my situation; and reserved more paper to let you know that the same place is well adapted to your present condition. Ever since I have known you you have divided your time between the business or pleasure of the fields and an easy, diffusive sort of reading, but if I were asked which way your literary taste ran, I should say for amusing and *illustrative* antiquities and for a kind of ‘curiosities of knowledge.’ As for a time your range of Agricultural employment is narrowed, embrace your other resource more closely, and make it supply the want of the other. This is a place where ‘curiosities of knowledge’ may be gleaned by handfuls in more than one way: they may be gained by reading curious and scarce books which you could not find elsewhere; or they may be seen in abundance in the course of a single walk in this wonderful city. What, for instance, can be more curious, interesting, wonderful, than the mysteries of trade and commerce; the practical and speculative skill of persons employed in its different parts; the lading and unlading of ships, the appearance of the various cargoes, the Division of labor, the arrival of precious freights from every part of the Globe, which owns no country that does not pour its riches into the bosom of our favored land; the various Galleries of pictures to which additions have been made since you have seen them, the works of the old masters, which improve upon the sight and are always new; the Museum, to which Compton can admit you and where you may read books that you never could anywhere else: The courts of justice, where you may see the working of our glorious system? I could enumerate more objects of interest, and yet I know little of London; and I dare say I have omitted many things that you remember. With regard to the

atmosphere, as it does not affect me, I am no judge further than this, that in all candor I know no time of the year in which town and country are more upon a par than this: in fact my experience of a London and Scot's common fog drives me to a vulgar proverb, though not inappropriate, as it too is founded on an observation of a Natural Phenomenon: viz., 'There is no choice amongst rotten apples' ! ! ! ! ! ! There have been, I believe, only two fogs since I have been here, and November is the misty month. We shall be a jolly party if you come up. You will have me in the evening, and doubtless renew your acquaintance with many pleasing friends: Love to Ellen. Your Dutiful Son, CHARLES READE."

Of Charles Reade's career as a law student we have but scanty records, and those of slender interest. Among his legal acquaintances of the epoch were Chief-Justice Sir N. Tindale, Mr. Benjamin Shaw, Q. C., Mr. Justice Lush, Mr. Edwin James, Q. C. and M. P., and Vice-Chancellor Shadwell. It was a curious coincidence that his first instructor in law should have been Samuel Warren, author subsequently of "Ten Thousand a Year." One might have presupposed that there would have been an almost perfect assimilation between the brain that conceived Tittlebat Titmouse and that which evolved Triplet. Yet, sad to relate, the two of a trade failed to agree, and after a year of Mr. Samuel Warren, Charles Reade shifted his seat to the chambers of Mr. Matthew Fortescue, a warm friend of his brother; and then—to reveal an ugly secret—dropped the law altogether for some years. In fact, though he entered at Lincoln's Inn in 1836, he was not called to the bar until 1842.

CHAPTER X.

“MAGDALEN.”

AFTER Charles Reade had been admitted actual Fellow, a certain Dr. Sewell, brother of the Founder of Radley College, and of the Warden of New College, claimed a lay Fellowship in his stead. Had the claim succeeded our author would have had to take Anglican Orders, or be ejected from his Fellowship. In his MS. he gently describes what was really a very barefaced attempt to jockey him. “There are only six lay Fellowships out of forty in Magdalen College,” he writes, “and I claimed one. Mr. Sewell, a Queen’s Counsel, about to succeed to a Fellowship, claimed it too, on the score of his being of higher standing *in the University* (*i. e.*, not as a Fellow). The matter turned on the interpretation of a statute; the college officers, by a majority of one, decided in favor of Sewell. I appealed to the Visitor. The Visitor directed the case to be heard before him. Neither side employed counsel. I was victorious, and won my first litigation out of eighteen, and retain my Fellowship to this day.”

This tells only half the story. President Routh, at first adverse, was won by his masterly argument over to his side. The Visitor was the Bishop of Winchester, Dr. Sumner, his mother’s friend; who, however, to be quite impartial, referred the case to his legal assessor. The college was so indignant at their decision being overruled that they passed a vote allowing Dr. Sewell to retain his

Fellowship as a layman. Had Charles Reade lost, *he* would have had to be ordained, or retire. A different measure was meted to Sewell, the plain truth being that he was popular with the common room. In this college kissing has always gone by favor, and the alumnus who is not so fortunate as to obtain its favor must expect that sort of dissimulated love which proverbially kicks its recipient down-stairs. It may be remarked, *passim*, that the boasted Founder's statutes were cast to the four winds when the interest of a *persona grata* chanced to be jeopardized. It is to be hoped that this spirit of partiality has died a natural death.

It was between the adverse decision of his unrighteous judges of the common room and the reversal of this act of attempted injury that an episode occurred in the life of Charles Reade which may perhaps provoke a smile. It was suggested to him by President Routh that if he chose to abandon the law and take his degree in medicine, the college, which was determined that, right or wrong, Dr. Sewell should pose as one of their law Fellows, might graciously permit him to hold a lay Fellowship. Perceiving that nearly all Magdalen was against him, and naturally being most unwilling to lose his Fellowship, Charles Reade went to Edinburgh to ascertain whether he could overcome his strong prejudice against the dissecting room and theatre. He thought he would begin with the latter as being possibly the less severe ordeal to his sensibilities, if not to his stomach. The experiment was not destined to succeed. He forced himself to enter the operating theatre, and saw a man bled. This was enough. Staggering to the door, he fainted away, and left Edinburgh, venesection, and horrors to people of a tougher fibre and a more material nature. Had it not been for the good Bishop of

Winchester, and had Medicine offered the only medium whereby he could retain his Fellowship, Charles Reade would have succumbed to fraud rather than have escaped at the cost of his moral and mental cuticle. As the event proved, he was avenged by a prelate who assuredly never more thoroughly magnified his office than when he defeated a common-room conspiracy; and from henceforward till his last breath the subject of this memoir drew his alimony from an unwilling and unsympathetic college.

He was, however, though victorious, none the less disgusted. His enemies were they of his own household, and he felt that they need not have been in such a hurry to decide against one who might yet do their body credit. The consciousness, however, of being out of place in the society of which he was a member drove him afield. He might have lapsed into a mere Oxford don. As it was, he roamed abroad to learn in Paris the rudiments of dramatic art and educate himself for the profession of letters. His enemies by their very malignity had done him a good turn. They saved him from Magdalen.

That institution, for some time after this episode, seldom saw him except on urgent business; albeit, the first occasion that took him to Oxford, after the Sewell trial, terminated in a way very gratifying to himself.

A certain Mr. Viner founded scholarships and fellowships in law open to the whole University. The Masters of Arts were the electors to the scholarships, and a scholar in due course became a Fellow for a term of years. Practically the man who, being otherwise eligible, *i. e.*, a graduate, a barrister, and a layman, could command the most votes, had the best chance of success. Charles Reade, on a vacancy occurring, resolved to offer himself as a candidate. In the coaching days M. A.'s could not so easily

crowd to Oxford as at present, and the election was usually determined by the votes of the residents, for the most part college tutors and Fellows. It occurred to him that the county might swamp the University, and his father's influence in the shire may be estimated by the one fact of his having been twice invited to represent it in the Tory interest. His college might not accord him its support, albeit there was a sort of code of honor prohibitive of opposition to a member of the society. But for once he could dispense with it. The noblemen and gentlemen of Oxon and Berks, who happened to be Masters of Arts, readily promised their votes and interest to the son of Mr. Reade of Ipsden. His mother canvassed the clergy, and where favorable answers were obtained offered conveyances free of cost. On the day of election Oxford swarmed with squires and parsons whipped up for Charles Reade, and thus when he came in head of the poll by a substantial majority, some chagrin found expression within the bosom of his college.

Charles Reade felt, and with reason, that he had administered a practical rebuff to his friends the enemies in Magdalen, so by way of enjoying their discomfiture did a deed his soul usually abhorred, viz., put in an appearance at the solemn High-Table dinner.

They drank his health in the college brown-sherry with the regulation formal courtesy. The etiquette of the High Table demanded that a victory for the society should be recognized, and the victor congratulated.

Soon, however, the nasty animus beneath the surface began to crop up.

"It is all very fine, Reade," said one of them, whose tongue was less guarded than that of the majority, "but you know you have displaced two better men than yourself."

It is easy to imagine the *susurrus* of sarcastic laughter that encircled the table as Charles Reade was thus rudely challenged. Said he quietly, "No ; better scholars, not better men."

"How so?" was the cutting rejoinder.

"The Vinerian," replied Charles Reade, "is a law scholarship, and law is a practical sort of science. Now the way in which my canvass was organized and carried out was rather unusual, but it argues a talent of the practical kind superior to that of my competitors. The University in its wisdom has chosen right."

The High Table as a whole may not have endorsed this apologia of the successful candidate, but some of the best minds of the college had the wit to perceive the rising star. Among them may be mentioned Bulley, successively Senior Tutor, and President ; Newman, the wit of the college ; Fisher, the present Senior Fellow, for whom, as being a gentleman, Charles Reade to the last professed the warmest regard ; Bloxam, the antiquarian ; and Mozley, leader-writer to the *Times*, and afterwards Regius Professor of Divinity. To this honorable list must be added the names of Dr. Daubeny, the exploiter of the atomic theory ; and Mr. Edwards, the mathematical tutor. As for President Routh, his regard for Charles Reade was so thorough that when he received from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge a request to name one of the Fellows of Magdalen as a recipient of the degree of M.A., *honoris causâ*, in that University, on the occasion of the installation of Prince Albert as its Chancellor, he at once sent in his name, and this, be it remembered, before he had written a line. The few men of brains whom the institution at that period could boast already began to appreciate the future author. It was

the scum of the college that formed itself into a hostile clique, and throughout endeavored to render Magdalen an impossible place of residence for a gentleman, who, though physically robust, was excessively sensitive.

In 1845 the office of Dean of Arts, tenable for a year, fell in due course to Charles Reade's option. He determined to refuse it, albeit by such refusal he would have forfeited the Vice-Presidency when his turn came, the regulation being that a Fellow must take all the college offices in succession, or abandon his claim to them. Moreover, the Dean of Arts would probably enjoy the privilege of nominating a Demy, *i. e.*, of making some fortunate gentleman a present of an annuity for life, commencing at about sixty, and ending with six hundred, a year. Under the circumstances, to decline the office of Dean of Arts was not quite worldly-wise ; but it entailed residence, and Charles Reade had no ambition of stepping into a hornet's nest. Eventually, at the urgent solicitation of his brother William, who promised to come and share his rooms, he reluctantly assented ; and Mr. Goldwin Smith, who at that time was a resident undergraduate Demy, has put on record his feelings of astonishment when the college officer, responsible for the moral conduct of the students, appeared on the scene clad in a bright green coat with brass buttons. This habiliment seems to have affected lastingly the professorial mind of Mr. Goldwin Smith, who possibly may still attribute the baptism of his crony, John Conington, under the college pump to the laxity of discipline encouraged by so grievous a decadence from his canons of sartorial propriety. Anyhow, during Charles Reade's year of deanery poor John Conington did suffer an involuntary immersion at the hands of the Demies and Gentlemen-Commoners, his offence being that he had en-

deavored to launch a debating society within the college walls. Both he and his friend, Mr. Goldwin Smith, took such dire umbrage at this indignity that they migrated to University College. From a purely academical point of view Magdalen sustained thereby an irreparable loss. An offence of that sort, however, would have to be dealt with by the Vice-President, and not by the Dean of Arts, so that the don in the green coat with brass buttons could not fairly be held to blame. Whether these riotous young gentlemen were emboldened by the spectacle of Lincoln or pea-green on the body of a dean may be open to discussion. Green, we know, is as revolutionary a color in Ireland as is red in France. At that time of his life, however, Charles Reade was a harmless Tory. He strove to propitiate the Fellows by playing whist in their common room. He evoked the enthusiasm of the manly undergraduates by his prowess with the willow on Cowley Marsh. He fished the Cherwell with a casting-net, and started archery in the grove, and bowls on the lawn. He could not smoke, or imbibe the traditional port, but he gave charming little dinner-parties, at one of which the guests were surprised to find an entire hare placed before each of them, in order, as their host phrased it, that no one should quarrel with his neighbor about the back. He devoured books in the Bodleian, and occasionally would astonish the home circle at Ipsden by dropping in to eight-o'clock breakfast after a seventeen miles' walk. He did not enjoy it all, but endured it with the constancy of a martyr, while, so far as the common room went, he escaped any positive friction. Their little sarcasms and sly innuendoes could not penetrate his crust of calm, impassive, unuttering indifference; and in the end they voted Reade an incomprehensible man, who in their judgment

was not quite so negative as they had presupposed him to be.

Now comes the oddest incident of this not very eventful year. As Dean of Arts he had a Demyship at his disposal, and alone of all college officers since A.D. 1460, when the first Demies were admitted, positively declined to nominate.

Was this electoral purism? Was it perversity? Was it sheer eccentricity? It may be ascribed to none of these motives, but simply to the circumstance of none of the candidates commending themselves to him. He would not import into the college any one of whose merit, intellectual and social, he did not feel conscientiously assured. That was all.

Nevertheless, he was canvassed. Sir John Chandos Reade, Bart., of Shipton Court, the head of his family, wrote in right royal style to command him to nominate one of his young friends. Then the son of that Mr. Slatter, of Rose Hill, to whom he was indebted for many a wheal on his young body, entered as a candidate, and Charles Reade was urged to remember the benefits he had received from diurnal flagellation, and make a handsome return for the moral elevation resulting therefrom. Unfortunately for the pecuniary interest of the amiable gentlemen thus pressed on the notice of the Dean of Arts, he was not easily to be influenced. He averred that he would neither disregard the mandate of the head of his ancient family, nor prefer another to the son of his whilom flagellant. He should therefore surrender his nomination to President Routh, in whose judgment and impartiality he felt the largest confidence. The common room opened its mouth wide in wonder at this self-denying ordinance, but most assuredly Charles Reade did not

suffer in its estimation; while the advocates of University and College reform upheld him as a model worthy of imitation, and as the initiator of a newer and purer system of election. It is not necessary perhaps to echo this exaggerated encomium. Had a relative, or the son of a friend, chanced to be a candidate, Charles Reade would have duly recognized the claims of consanguinity or sodality. His merit, if merit it was, consisted in declining to nominate merely for the sake of exercising his power of patronage, and above all he dreaded the responsibility of introducing an unknown quantity into the college. If Magdalen had been gracious to him, he would have responded to her benevolence with enthusiasm. As it was, in lieu of being an *alma mater* she tried to pose as an *injuncta noverca*, and at the last, after fifty years of Fellowship, his cry was, "I will never enter their common room again." But he was jealous for the honor of his college, far more so than the gentry who were content to pick the college purse while they raved about the Founder, and romanced concerning statutes whose spirit they persistently disregarded.

And so, thanks to the fraternal self-sacrifice of brother William, who magnanimously devoted three weeks at a stretch periodically in order to relieve Charles Reade from boredom, the year of deanery was got through. Goldwin Smith took umbrage at the green coat; but with the exception of this superior person, no one quarrelled with a dean who could not sink to the level of a don. Magdalen in those halcyon days was an easy-going, genial, academical club, and in summer really a very charming place of residence; indeed, brother William ever after spoke of the college as luxurious and most agreeable. A domestic man, he did not relish a pro-

longed absence from his wife and children; but the hospitality of Magdalen, and the excellence of its *cuisine*, more than reconciled him to occasional spells of *solitude à deux* with his absent and rather silent brother.

This was the last prolonged residence within the college walls, with the exception of his year of Vice-Presidency, that Charles Reade submitted to. The lines of his life were not cast in Oxford, and his visits there were mere episodes.

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CHAPTER XI.

PARIS AND GENEVA.

WE will now for the nonce dismiss Oxford, and revert to Charles Reade's happier and freer existence apart from the academical corporation with which he possessed so little affinity.

During his vacations as a law student he resolved to see as much of the world as possible. Ipsden was his headquarters when he was not undergoing the solemn farce of eating his Lincoln's Inn dinners, but he roamed afield, chiefly, however, in his native land and in Scotland. The coaching days were not those of luxurious travelling, but he was a great walker, and some Oxford acquaintances afforded him alike hospitality, introductions, and splendid sport in the Highlands. He was a gay, light-hearted youngster at that period, with a fine taste for dancing hornpipes and reels, and Scotland certainly attracted him not a little. He remembered that his maternal grandmother was the daughter of an officer in the young Pretender's army, and could therefore boast a slight strain of Scotch blood in his otherwise English veins. The Scotch character, moreover, interested him profoundly. He admired its solidity and caution. Hating their whiskey, he was charmed by their high courage and splendid truthfulness. What religion he had was essentially Calvinistic, and in his old age, when the strong convictions of youth returned as the tide after the ebb, he preferred the simple

Presbyterian form of worship to the ritual of the Church of England. No marvel, therefore, that Scotland drew him towards her, or that the scene of one of his earlier and perhaps most natural essays in the art of dramatic narration should have been laid in Scotland. "*Christie Johnstone*" was very much the product of the bright years of his young manhood, though actually penned nearly two decades later. It represented a revival of early impressions, blended with a subsequent experience of the risks and perils of herring fishing. Scotland seems to have appealed to him strongly, not merely as one devoted to his gun, and to a certain extent an admirer of the picturesque, nor solely because it had been idealized for the youth of his generation with such rare skill by Sir Walter Scott, a master he was taught by his Tory parents, if indeed he needed teaching, to reverence; but equally because he found the Scotch so genuine, a people at once practical and ideal. For Charles Reade, himself the most impractical and unbusiness-like of all men, a dreamer who at times was actually unconscious of what was passing around him, held practical talent, as a quality beyond his comprehension, in high honor. Of course as a keen observer he was never blind to the weak side of the North British character. "*Christie Johnstone*" displays a close analysis of the Scotch habit of thought, so much so that it might have been written by a Scotchman born and bred. Its every line evinces the friendly and admiring critic who had journeyed to North Britain for amusement, and remained to become warmly appreciative. Between the years 1837 and 1847 his visits to the land of cakes were chronic; and when, in 1839, his brother William wedded as his second wife Miss Murray of Ardbennie in Perthshire, Scotland offered a double attraction.

In 1839 his fond mother seems to have provided him with adequate funds for a tour on the Continent. The route he travelled has since then become so wayworn as to savor of the trite and commonplace. Everybody now knows Paris, Geneva, and the Rhine by heart. It must be remembered, however, that in 1839 the British tourist was not much abroad. Railways were but commencing even in England. Travellers, therefore, had to submit to the weariful pace of the diligence, and the imminent risk of accidents when that pace happened to be accelerated. Hence a small tour through Western Europe involved fatigue and expense to such an extent that most men shrank from it, preferring to live at home at ease, and acquire their knowledge of foreign parts from books and newspapers. Fortunately we possess a fragmental record of this episode in Charles Reade's life from his own pen in the shape of letters sent home. They are the effusions of youth and young Oxford, of a brain that had been saturated with Aristotle, and trained to view all things human and divine through academic spectacles. Yet they contain flashes of original thought, couched in the language of *Readiana*, and even at that early age indicating the bent of his mind towards character-drawing. He went abroad not so much to study architecture or stare at pictures as to obtain a new view of men and manners. Those familiar with his works will recognize in them his passion for individuality and detestation of average. He may not have been gifted with the keen eye of Dickens for oddity and eccentricity, but a character devoid of distinctive coloring failed to interest him; and we may perceive in the following correspondence how eagerly he was groping amid strange scenes after fresh types. There is but little to show that at this period of his life he did more than

dream of authorship ; he may or may not have forecast his future, but anyhow he set to work in workmanlike fashion, probing humanity below the surface, and acquiring a knowledge of character while yet ignorant of the very rudiments of dramatic construction. He shall, however, tell his own tale in his own words.

The envelope wherein the following five letters were sealed bears on the reverse this memorandum :

Four (the number actually was five)
letters from
Charles Reade
to
Papa
and
Mamma

A.D. 1839

Aetatis suae 25.

What brutal ink they are written on !

Sealed up Oct. 18 X60

Whilst writing 2nd Vol.

Cloister and the Hearth.

Scene.

Gerard and the

Dusseldorf Doctor.

D.D.

The first is addressed to his mother at Ipsden House, Wallingford, Berks, England ; and apparently, owing to its being insufficiently stamped, the maternal purse was mulcted to the extent of two shillings and tenpence, a heavy penalty even for the days of the shilling postage. It runs thus:

BEDFORD HOTEL, RUE ST. HONORÉ, PARIS.

Wednesday, July 3, 1839.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—I write a few lines to notify my safe arrival at the French capital. I fell in with an acquaintance in London going as far as Paris, and, as he speaks French, I was glad to close with the offer of his company. This, however, delayed me longer in town than I liked, and longer than I would have waited had the delay been first announced as a condition of our travelling together. We went down to Southampton by railway and coach, Francis Faber, whom I met in London, having dissuaded me from the long sea trip from London. Railway, forty-six miles; coach road, eighteen.

"On getting into the railway at Vauxhall I found a face opposite to me that made me laugh. Thinks I, I am sure I have laughed at you before. On taxing my memory, I became conscious that it was the ludicrous phiz of a comedian, whom I had seen represent a miserly servant, whom his miserly master had, in a paroxysm of generosity, promised a guinea, which in a cooler moment he repented of, but which the other did not fail to extort. Learning from our remarks that we were going abroad, this gentleman set his eyes and tongue agoing, one as fast as the other, and drew a rapid sketch of the tour we ought to make, and the route we ought to pursue. This finished, our rapid vehicle set him down some miles from London, on which he said, "God bless you!" and made a theatrical *congé*.

"This youth's remarks did not stick as some people's do; however, I remember, he said there were no cathedrals abroad so fine as the British, whereupon I pushed him with Milan, Cologne, and Antwerp.

"The sea trip from Southampton to Havre was wearisome. I was squeamish, though not vanquished. We started from Portsmouth at twelve, and reached Havre at half-past ten. The harbor of this place, where we landed, is like the locks in a river, so narrow. As soon as ever we ran it, 'Whoop,' says a chap on one bank, 'Oop,' says another on the other, whereby we were given to understand that the *Monarch*, Captain Forder, passenger, C. R. L. F. of M. C. (Charles Reade, Lay Fellow of Magdalen College), was not undiscovered by the gens-d'armes, douaniers, and other harpies. One of the former was on board of us the moment the vessel touched the pier, occupied the passage-plank with his body, and took all our passports. Our portmanteaus were in the hold of the vessel *by law*, our bags we were allowed at once to take to the Custom-House, where they were cursorily examined by the C. H. officers, as the portmanteaus

were diligently searched the next morning at 8 o'clock. Every hotel keeps a chap called a *commissionaire*, Angliée a decoy duck, whose business it is to stand on the quay, pounce upon the arrivals before they can recover their scattered senses, announce the immeasurable superiority of his inn, and by way of commentary bustle thither with his victim's luggage. Being prepared for this, we sang out, 'London Hotel,' whereupon all the other ducks fled before a stout, noisy Frenchman, who poured a tide of very tolerable English upon us, and carried us off to the London Hotel. We slept in the middle of the house, yet up three pairs of stairs—bricked floor of course. Monsieur le *Commissionaire* rose with the sun, and secured us places in the diligence. The *coupé* being engaged, we took the *banquette*, an open place like a cab at the top of all, where the conductor or guard sits with three passengers, the coachman sitting in a great seat bang over-right the wheel horse's shoulders.

"Havre is a very fine town. There is a lofty hill a little way out fairly studded with houses. On that hill live one hundred and fifty English families. Our *commissionaire* bustled about, got our passports, showed us the town, bolted into the great Church, jabbered so loud as quite to drown the priests' gabbling, and exit sprinkling himself with some of the Holy Water. Paris, and our route thither, which was magnificent in point of scenery, is for another letter, better ink, paper, pens, etc. I beg to assure you of my safety, and the pleasure I have already derived from my trip.

Your affectionate Son, CHARLES."

One would like to frame a guess as to who the companion of his travel was, and, further, as to the identity of the comedian with the mirth-provoking visage. He has left no clue to either. Had the former been an Oxonian his name would doubtless have appeared, while as regards the latter, the theatre being anathema at Ipsden, one feels rather surprised that a comedian was alluded to even incidentally, and still more that this was followed up by an avowal of having seen him play. Perhaps Mrs. Reade may have frowned and ejaculated impatiently when she read that portion aloud to the family circle. But we may rest assured this little *lapsus calami* about the theatre was more than amply atoned for by the sly hit at the priest

in the great church of Havre. Uncle Faber, from his splendid solitude at Sherburn Hospital, had predicted the downfall of the Papacy, the wish in his case being father to the thought, and his sister-in-law of Ipsden firmly believed the good man to be one of the major prophets. Son Charles knew that nothing was so likely to charm his mother as a hard hit at anybody, or anything, papistical. Hence the allusion to priestly jabber may be taken *cum grano* as a bit of diplomacy.

It seems strange that Paris, for which city he subsequently conceived such a strong affection, should not by any means have taken him captive at first sight. Eight years later, indeed up to the date of the Revolution of 1848, which fairly nauseated him, he idolized Paris, and seemed when absent beset with a restless desire to revisit it. Paris appears to have grown upon him, but not until he had perfected himself in colloquial French, and was able to sit out a French play without the aid of a dictionary.

His first impressions of the gayest of gay cities may be gathered from the following letter, evidently penned with great care. Mrs. Reade was one of those domestic deities that require much propitiation, and her favorite son had the best reasons for desiring to keep in her good graces. *Vide* the postscript.

“HOTEL BEDFORD, Tuesday, July 9.

“MY DEAR MOTHER,—I have received through Lady Steele one letter from you. By the time this reaches you I shall be, D. V., in Geneva, and in possession of any other you may have sent there. My last letter left me at Havre, where we slept, and were flea-bitten. On perambulating the town in the morning (this being, you are to know, the first foreign town I had ever seen) I began to look out for the points of difference. The houses have an entirely different appearance, but in what the difference lies it would not be easy to define; however, they are higher, the windows

open like folding doors, and have generally green blinds. They are also all old, and this is the case in every part of France I have seen. Nothing appears to have been built within the last two centuries. The streets crowded with people, who wear blue blouses pretty generally.

“We left Havre at eleven o'clock in the morning, and as we were occupied some time at the Custom-House, had not much time to make observations. The *coupé* being taken, we had the *banquette*. The first thing I discovered was, that in France carriages take the right hand in passing. We had a fresh coachman every stage, who drove horses just as Englishmen drive pigs, let the reins fall upon their backs, and laid the whip into them in forty different ways. The whip is everything with these fellows. It is never idle, always either cracking in the air or stinging the cattle. We drove out of Havre with five horses, two behind, three in front—a very common number. The wheels of the diligence were two thirds as broad as those of an English broad-wheeled wagon, but we rolled along at a good pace over a finer road than any in Oxfordshire, or, in fact, any that ever I saw except the Great North Road. We had no reason to regret not having taken the boat to Rouen, since the turnpike presents the finer view of the two. The Seine is a magnificent river, and its beauties are seen from the road, which never separates long from it, infinitely better than they can be from the river. The way in which the river first bursts upon your sight, as you wheel round a corner to descend a hill that has taken you an hour to mount, is prodigiously fine. Another view I particularly remarked. We had lost sight of the river some time, and entered a very woody country. We were ascending a mountain in a very serpentine manner, when, at a turn of the road, we saw at one moment a huge basin of wooded hills, before, behind, and on the left; on the right, far below, two gigantic branches of the Seine rolling through such a plain!—grass, corn, groves of apple-trees, towns, villages, chateaux, steam-boats, and large merchant vessels on the river, the air perfumed with the apple-trees on the side of the roads. Rouen is first seen from a high hill. Edinburgh is *not to be compared to it!* The audacious sweep of the river, the mountains behind the town, the town itself, as picturesque an object as either the mountain or the river, as if nature had planted it to give the scene the magnificent cathedral, worth a thousand Nôtre Dames! Oh, my eye!

“We were annoyed with no *pavé* between Havre and Paris except before entering a town, when you have generally half a mile of it; but I hear we shall travel a great deal on *pavé* between Paris and Switzerland. The towns are far more frequent than in England. Chateaux, I did not see

many; the finest belonged to a ribbon-merchant, so trade flourishes over here, I suppose. At Rouen they put us into the *coupé* without extra charge, and mounted some snobs in the *banquette*. The diligence drivers flanked all their acquaintances they met on the road, making the leather thong crack about six inches from their skulls. However, it sometimes happened that these foot-passengers touched their hats to the driver (touching the hat in France is no more than nodding or winking in England), in which case he always shifted his other instrument of recognition to his left hand, and, drawing off his cap, bowed with graceful, respectful *empressement*.

"We had one nice scene after Rouen. The sun had just set, when, in the middle of a tremendous hill, from which Rouen (at a great distance) was visible, we, having eight horses, caught the Dieppe diligence with but five. The Dieppe people got out; incited by their example we did the same. The road lay through a wood. Thirty or forty people walking by the side of the two enormous machines, some smoking, others lighting their pipes, all chatting, polite, and agreeable, produced a pleasant effect. At the top of the hill our humanity was rewarded by a fine retrospect. We raced the Dieppe all the way to Paris, beat them when about three miles from P.; but as we clapped on a handsome set of horses two miles from the city, just to make a show, our old friend rolled by, the driver indulging in pantomimic gestures that ended in a flank all round for his beasts. On reaching Paris I went into a warm bath, for which I paid four francs and a half. A knowing man in the inn told me he gets his at the same place for one franc six sous; the fact is, you must ask for a simple bath, value one franc. I had a complete one, viz., one covered with a piece of linen, price one franc and a half, which adds nothing to your comfort. Take your own soap. I took what the man offered me, for which I was charged thirty sous, at which preposterous price it is actually sold in the shops. To be sure such delicious soap never found its way to England; it melts like a peach, and smells like nectar. I mean to bring you a cake.

"Mr. Lane, the clerk of the hotel, speaks French and English with equal fluency. I begged him to learn at the *poste restante* where Miss Reade was. They refused to give him any information, and I hear this is their common practice. Mr. Lane got me my Swiss passport, and has been negotiating for a place in the diligence; but, to my horror, just as I had packed up everything, word came that the diligence was full till Friday, when a place in the *banquette*, or *interieure*, was left! The *coupé*

taken for nineteen days except one place on Saturday! So here I am booked for three days more in Paris, of which I am heartily tired. I have dined twice with Lady Steele, and since this *contrctemps* have accepted another invitation. I have been once at the theatre to see the famous Mdle. Mars, who, at the age of seventy years, enacts pretty girls of seventeen. Such, however, was not the case this time. She represented Mdle. de Belle Isle, a lady of rank and misfortune, who comes to Paris to throw herself at the king's feet on behalf of her father and brother in the Bastile. Here, as her suit has just begun to prosper, a singular concatenation of circumstances brings her virtue under suspicion, and every attempt she makes to clear up the mystery serves by a fatality to make matters worse. The scenes between her and her chivalrous lover, the Chevalier Detubigny, were very striking. At length, in defiance of what appears to him the evidence of his senses, he undertakes the defence of her honor. Then follows a scene in which he bids her farewell on the eve of a desperate duel he has undertaken, unknown, of course, to her. This was so well written and finely acted that, although I followed the players with a book, the sentences of which I had partly learned by help of a dictionary, I sniffed a little, and was very near yelping right out. I shall never forget how the dog said those three words, '*Je pars, Gabrielle!*'

"'Breathes there a man with soul so dead!' I shall be very glad to return home, as soon as ever I have seen the principal beauties of Switzerland. I have picked up one or more little traits of character, national and industrial, but not so many as I could have wished. Of the public buildings in '*avis*' I will only say at present they are so magnificent and numerous that after the first two days the mind is no longer capable of surprise or much gratified by anything in that way I could gaze at. The picture-gallery of the Louvre is an *avenue*, a long walk for robust persons. Nôtre Dame is a humbug, unworthy to be the cathedral of Paris. Versailles I have seen, but could not gain admission. Before I leave Paris, since I am to be detained here, I think I might as well write the letter I promised my father, in which I will mention one or two of the things I have seen and observed in Paris. In the meantime, love to all.

"Your affectionate Son,

CHARLES READE.

"P. S.—In answer to something in your letter, I have not spent one farthing of your money in knick-knackerics, and I will not spend above one napoleon so during all my tour.

"*Foi de Chevalier!*"

The postscript is very telltale. Mrs. Reade, who styled her husband "Mr. Reade" when the clouds chanced to have collected on her brow, and "my dearest John" when the sun shone, was, in her way, a domestic tyrant. In the twenties of his life son Charles was no match for her, and we may read their mutual relations in the deferential tone adopted by him when referring to the delicate subject of money.

The letter to his father, if ever written, is not extant. Of the series, preserved apparently by his fond mother, the next in chronological order is addressed to his brother William from Geneva. What is now styled the Grand Hôtel des Bergues, in 1839 had not plastered itself with a grandiloquent epithet; grandeur being, apparently, the product of railways. It was tenanted at the time by one Herr A. E. Rufenacht, and the note-paper placed at the disposal of its guests was headed with a vignette representing with average accuracy the section of the northern side of Geneva towards the lake, including, of course, the "Bergues" itself.

"My dear William," he writes, "the above is A. E. Rufenacht's notion of Geneva, viz., the place upon the borders of whose lake stands the inn that calls him its master. All the beauties of this noble place lie on that side of the lake which, for certain reasons, escaped our *maitre-d'hôtel's* picturesque investigation. In point of fact, Geneva is not the dirty hole he has represented it. On his side of the lake are some very high hills, to which his vignette does no justice; on the other side, at different distances from the water-side, are the famous mountains of Switzerland. A. the town, mostly situate on steep, rising ground. B. C. mountains rising direct from a thick fringe of trees, spotted with a few Swiss houses *ornées*, on the very brink of the water. E. a mountain lying a little back. F. G. others a long distance down the lake. J. long, straggling, hundred-peak Mont Blanc. X. a mountain overlooking the highest part of the town. O. the two deep, narrow streams in which the lake is made to rush through the town. Mont Blanc is so distant that (other mountains being close) its vast height reaches the mind only in the form of an obvious inference, *i. e.*, you can see

no part of Mont Blanc that is not either covered or sprinkled with snow, but the fine eminences (not less, I imagine, than five thousand feet) near at hand are clothed with vines to their very summits. I loitered about by the side of the blue waters last night, and asked myself whether it was possible I could be personally present at this famous city; yet I am sure my arrival hither was not contrived with that magical celerity which naturally dazzles the senses, and might excuse a person for fancying that nothing is but what is not. Sir, I left Paris at 5 P.M. Saturday, and arrived here Tuesday 6 P.M., seventy-seven hours, during which time I never left the diligence, except at the ordinary stoppages, and twice every twenty-four hours for breakfast and dinner, the only meals allowed to travellers in French coaches. After being out of bed three nights, and encountering dust and heat unknown in Britain, I went to rest at my usual hour, and got up to breakfast at nine without the slightest feeling of fatigue. With regard to the heat in the South of France and here, I need only say that I rode in the diligence without my coat and neckcloth, and sleep without one blanket, and the windows, as wide as folding-doors, wide open.

"Paris. I arrived there at seven in the morning, after twenty-one hours of the best diligence in France, went to Lawson's English hotel, 323 Rue St. Honoré. Bath, breakfast, etc. It is so impossible to convey in a letter any idea of grand public buildings that I shall reserve them for colloquy, and confine myself to other matters of observation. I soon discovered that the French understand pleasure better than we, and they pursue it steadily, not boisterously nor laboriously, into which contrary extreme the English are apt to fall, but with a graceful yet matter-of-course air. The most dissipated keep what in London would be thought very early hours; but their evening pleasures commence early, and they are free from that stark, staring, national madness which induces us to sit sipping wine three consecutive hours. Talk of the population of London, it appears nothing compared with that of Paris to the eye of a walker; at the same moment the Boulevards at every part, the Tuileries gardens, all the places of public amusement, and all the streets are so crowded you can hardly see the ground: this is in the evening. The *cafés*, which are extremely numerous, have often large awnings erected outside them, under which some fifty chairs are set. The visitants in fine weather sit here and sip their coffee, or eat their ices in a delightful shade. One very cheap amusement is Musard's concert—one franc. The music, which is all instrumental, is executed in magnificent style; the musicians play in a large building, roofed, but opened on the side facing the gardens, between which and the said

building nothing intervenes but a few pillars. In the building and outside hundreds of seats are placed, hundreds of persons walk during the performance in the gardens and orange grove, from which the music is heard to advantage, a noble *café* adjoining. The building and gardens blaze with lamps, and the former with gold and silver columns. Calino's concert is conducted on a similar plan, but here in the garden is an amphitheatre, where chaps ride with a spear at the ring, so much a turn. Of course I have been all along on the lookout for little traits of character, national and individual, but with no very brilliant success. However, at Nôtre Dame I saw two French ladies encounter each other at the door of the confessional. Instantly they both recoiled, courtesied *à la mode*, and insisted A that B, B that A, should have the precedence. One would have thought they were stepping into the *salle-à-manger*. At length one, with a deep expression of gratitude and affability, consented to go and confess her sins first.

"Government, which interferes with everything in France, kills all the meat for the Parisian tables. There are in Paris four thundering slaughter-houses, something in the style of an English Royal Palace. One of these I visited, and having to cross a moderate-sized river of blood and filth, I showed signs of aversion, whereon my French conductor grinned from ear to ear and said: '*Monsieur, ce n'est pas propre!*'"

"Again in the Royal forest of Versailles I found a haycock, a solitary haycock. This is for the Frenchmen to jump over and upon, *pour s'amuser*. The forest is full of people every evening, amusing themselves with conversation, soft balls, and dancing. I went one evening to see the lower classes dance, having heard so much of their grace, etc.; but was rather disappointed. One or two of the men danced nicely, but they were some of the *jeune gens* from Paris. There were only two aristocratic housemaids, whereof one lolloped, the other spat. The ladies are so very ill-made in France, that, of course, they cannot dance so well as English women *with one half of their immense practice* could do.

"My attempts at speaking French are said by those who delight in remote analogies to resemble the convulsive efforts of a chimney-sweeper to swarm up a fresh-soaped pole to that joint of mutton which he shall never attain. At the bath last night I asked for a comb; they nodded assent, and brought an egg! I once soared in conversation as high as what Aristotle calls a gnome, *i.e.*, a sort of moral maxim sententiously expressed: *

* He highly recommends the dramatic poet to season his verse with a judicious interspersion of these.

e. g., a cab-driver was working his machine over the stones to take me to a neighboring village, and kept whipping his beast. Says I, 'Ne fatiguez pas votre cheval. Les chevaux sont les bons serviteurs de l'homme.' 'Bon,' says the Frenchman with a look of intense admiration, his eyes glistening, and (as they invariably do when anything bright strikes their minds from within or without) took his horse a flank that sounded like the crack of a pistol. A delicious effect was produced in the coffee-room at Lawson's hotel by the unexpected interserction of one word into what promised to be a romantic observation. An Englishman said, 'The tomb of Eloïse and Abelard in the cemetery of Père la Chaise is choked up with weeds and dirt. It's a sad pity their tomb should go to decay in this manner, the *parties* (*quelle horreur !*) having made such a noise in the world.'

"I went to the Morgue twice. There was a corpse there each time. The first had no marks, the second a number of little cuts round the left breast. If you walk over the Parisian bridges at night, they pitch you over into the Seine, fish you up, and, bringing you to the Morgue, obtain from Government 5 francs for finding what was, properly speaking, never lost. There are fifty thousand soldiers in Paris. All the streets are guarded with military, besides the gens - d'armes, but the bridges are not. If you must cross a bridge at night, you ask for a couple of soldiers—one won't come, because he must return alone. They escort you over, and receive from you four or five francs. There was a small row in Paris just before I came away, which detained my washerwoman from me an hour or two. I can't say what was done. If fifty or a hundred citizens were killed, a Parisian, male or female, would call it a trifling affair.

"Ashamed am I, O Bill, to send such a poor letter as this to England; but I must this day ascend the hill that overlooks Geneva, and am anxious to let you all know where I am, and what are my plans, without delay. Tomorrow I steam down the lake, visit Lausanne, with other places, and get across to Chamounix. I have Nellie's map and a guide-book, and money enough to buy the costume necessary for the hills and tour for a week before I return to Geneva, in doing which I shall touch at places on the lake omitted purposely in going. By that time I expect to find a remittance, which will enable me to go by diligence to Lucerne. Then I shall ascend the Righi, descend it on the other side, get to Basle, and sail to Rotterdam, stopping at places on the Rhine, or not, as may happen. I wish I had you with me. One requires sympathy to season the very finest dish Nature can dress for us. Best love to all at home.

"Your affectionate Brother,

CHARLES READE.

"P. S.—I wrote from Dijon to my mother to ask for some money. If she will send me a Bank of England note, just taking the number, and address Poste Restante, or Hôtel des Bergues, there is no chance of its mis-carrying. I shall obtain in Geneva its full value in French money, which is current everywhere, whereas the Genevese coin is rejected in parts of Switzerland."

The above affords a fair idea of the writer's mental attitude at that period of his life. Addressed to a brother who had been first the naughty boy of the family, then sailor, next soldier, and subsequently a man of leisure enjoying the income of an eldest son, it was penned with a trifle less constraint than those to his father and mother, yet in the full consciousness of its affording pabulum for the Ipsden breakfast-table. Of all men Charles Reade throughout his life was most unwilling to report himself, or detail his every word and action. It is not too much to affirm that he preferred to shroud himself in a thin veil of mystery. This tour, however, was evidently undertaken on the pre-existent arrangement, that he was to narrate at all events the outline of his journey. Doubtless the route had been chalked out with his sister Nellie (Ellinor), who was much attracted by the Continent. Hence the passing allusion to her map as to a pole star.

This and the other letters of the series would be commonplace but for the indications they afford of the gradual evolution of literary capacity. He wrote as he conversed, sententiously, and with due regard to Aristotle's canon. It must be remembered, however, that *malgré* his mild philosophizing, he was then a bright and sprightly young man, brimful of vigor, a pedestrian, and an athlete. It was on his return from this very self-same tour that the writer of these lines saw him jump on the Ipsden dining-room table, an oval board with many legs, and, fiddle in

hand, strike up a merry tune and dance the double shuffle. Although a Fellow of Magdalen, he was almost a boy; indeed, it took him many years to don the gravity of manhood. He thought epigrammatically, and though he had not yet begun to write his thoughts as he thought them, his speech was invariably not merely pointed, but barbed. His letters are of value to his friends as giving a clew to the steady progress of his mind towards literature, and especially towards the drama, the pole to which his whole being seemed at all times and in all places to turn.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOSPICE OF ST. BERNARD.

THE next epistle of the series is addressed to his father, and contains more of the Charles Reade of later days. It is penned in a freer vein than the solemn essay he indited on entering as a law student, but there are still ample evidences of a desire to gain his father's appreciation. He was writing to a man who enjoyed the reputation in his own county of being an admirable *raconteur*, a ready wit, and as quick at repartee as he was gentle in his sarcasm. He knew the old Squire as a keen observer of human nature, and as possessing that practical talent which he himself lacked. In writing to his fond, exacting mother he was always in leading-strings; in addressing his brother he dropped to mere colloquy; but when attempting description for the perusal of his father he was put on his mettle. Hence in this effusion, crude as it is, and barely suggesting the future author, we detect more of decided literary effort, and indeed a forecast of some of his best work, such, for example, as the scenes in "The Cloister and the Hearth," where he contrasts the mind of the Church with that of the World. But here, as in all his earlier letters, there is noticeable none of that magnificent polish, still less the crystallization of ideas, which was the characteristic of his style as an author. He had not as yet begun to school his pen, and was wont in after-years to ridicule the diffuseness which he subsequently labored to cor-

rect. We see here none the less the quick eye for effects, the clear diagnosis of men's minds, and the love of epigram, which was one of his distinguishing traits through life. All, it will be remarked, is in embryo, and at times shapeless and commonplace, *disjecta membra*, requiring collocation and concentration. A biography, however, must necessarily be a record of development, and for this reason we give the less matured as leading up by degrees to the best of our author. The letter opens with lines quoted from memory, as is evidenced by an erasure. We give it, as the rest of this series, word for word:

“Seven weary uphill leagues we sped
The setting sun to see,
Sullen and grim he sank to rest,
Sullen and grim sank we;
Six sleepless hours of night we passed
The rising sun to see,
Sullen and grim he rose at last,
Sullen and grim rose we.’

MILTON, “Pr. R.” 1st Book.

HÔTEL DE LA TOUR, MARTIGNY, *Wednesday.*

“MY DEAR FATHER,—I write to you in the middle of a pedestrian tour. On Friday afternoon last I walked from Geneva, knapsack on my back, to Bonneville—eighteen miles; the next day to Chiles and Vallenches, *char* to Chamounix. From Chamounix, the next day, I walked to Montanvert, and hopped about with a pole on the Mer de Glace; the next day from Chamounix, whither one is forced to return from Montanvert. I walked, and rode upon a chance mule, to Martigny; from Martigny next day to Orlieve, thence walked the grand route to L’Hospice de St. Bernard, from thence to the Col de Ferry, Orlieve, and so to Martigny. In the course of the excursion I have supped full of the terrible and sublime, and am now no more excited by entering a gloomy gorge, with great masses of rock bulging out from the top of great, soaring mountains over my head, than you are when Green Hill happens to burst upon your view, as you destine to destruction the hereditary beeches. I have been unfortunate with Mont

Blanc. Although nobody knows so well when the sun is out of bed as he, he wore his nightcap all the time I was at Chamounix, and when I got to the other side of him he appeared no higher than his neighbors. The fact was, he was the most distant of them all, and the ground, or rather snow, I trod upon was seven thousand six hundred and forty feet above the level of the sea.

"The Aiguilles, as they are called, that shoot up nearly under the traveller's nose, when he is at the top of the little hill Montanvert, tower perpendicularly like a spear's head. The light, fleecy clouds of a fine day sail across their necks, but their points and heads peer out above everything, so lofty and so near, that, like high buildings, they appear as you look at them to be moving slowly along the sky. I care little how high above some sea a hundred leagues off any given hill is known by calculation to be; the mountain that rises highest above the level of my eyes as I look at it pleases them most.

"You have heard and read and seen pictures of the dogs of St. Bernard, how they pick a dead man out of the snow, bark three times, lick him dry, cut back to the convent (*sic*), ring the bell, nab the porter as soon as he appears, and draw him by the coat-tails to the place, and whine till the poor man is brought to life again with blankets and spirits in the kitchen; at other times, when they think it looks likely to snow, how they turn out with a bottle of cognac round their necks, throw themselves, as if by merest accident, in a traveller's way, refresh him, and slyly conduct him to the monastery.

"Such tales I, of yore, amused myself with, but as soon as I had finally fixed on my profession, it occurred to me that I must make up my mind to conjugate the verb 'humbug' in the active voice alone. As I ascended to St. Bernard I said to myself, 'What do these dogs really do?' Why, they are taken out by a servant, and when they find a body, they scratch, as every other dog omits no opportunity of doing. One of the monks, in answer to the question I put, told me the dogs *never went out alone*; however, I must tell you, that when they find themselves in the immediate vicinity of a body they set up a loud bark, which brings the accompanying servant to the spot. So that others have flattered, and I done justice to the animals.

"I must tell you something about my visit to the hospice. I started from Martigny with a *char-à-banc* mule and guide, detached the mule from the *char* at Sulde, a village half-way, and rode him to the hospice. On my arrival I was shown by a monk into the *salle-à-manger*, where were five

strangers, who rose on my entrance, and as we sat down to dinner immediately, I have no doubt I had been descried from a distance and waited for. The dinner, unlike any other in this country, consisted of a succession of single dishes, each carved by a monk, for I must tell you that, as there were two ladies in the company, the monks could not, by their rules, dine with us, as otherwise they would, but were represented by one of their number. First, soup; second, fritters, *beignets de pommes*, as they call them; third, stewed beef; fourth, roast veal; fifth, cheese and nuts, which made a contemporaneous appearance. Our monk was young, well-bred, and well-mannered. He wore the dress of his order—a black fool's-cap, with a round tassel at top, a coarse black robe belted round the waist, a vest buttoned up to the throat with pretty little round convex buttons planted half an inch apart, a military stock made of little beads, a piece of white tape curled round his neck, and, descending his breast, was lost to sight; at the end of this no doubt hung some religious toy or other. I caught (though you may be sure I was all ears) nothing of the conversation but this: he told us that a military man, a friend of the superior's, having seen through the world, and imbibed a thorough distaste for it, obtained a vacant place among the *confrères* of St. Bernard. His boxes, five or six in number, were sent up, and the next afternoon he came. 'Much cooler here than in the valley,' says he. '*Oui, monsieur, ici l'air est toujours vif,*' responded a monk. The next morning at breakfast there was a palpable fog, or rather—which of course, from its height, is an every-day occurrence—St. Bernard was deep in the clouds. The soldier, tired of war's alarms, conversed a little, eat much, and meditated more. At noon the sentinel saw a figure wrapped in a military cloak descending the hill with rapid strides, and a note left in the refectory hoped the brethren would not put themselves to inconvenience with the baggage, as its removal from St. Bernard's was an affair of secondary importance, and did not call for despatch.

"The wine here is delicious. For this I had been prepared by my guide, who when I asked him if the holy brethren drank wine, responded exactly thus, '*Oui, oui, et du bon vin! He! he! et du bon vin! et du bon vin, he! he! he! et du bon vin, he! he! he! he!*' If no sign of mortification appears in the stomachs and faces of the monks of St. Bernard, it is nevertheless true that they devote themselves to a deadly climate for the benefit of their fellow-creatures; four young monks out of their small number were lying dead not long ago. In winter of course it is cruelly cold; in summer, it is best described by the epithet (spelt aright) I have put above

into a reverend gentleman's mouth. However, take an instance: there is a little building adjoins the convent (*sic*) used as a morgue. Into this all travellers found dead and unowned are put for the purpose of recognition. Here, such is the nature of the air of St. Bernard, they remain for three years in such a state that their friends would recognize them. The features and character of the face remain, and the whole carcass turns into 'bones and leather,' without decomposing. These things I saw within two yards of me, but seeing is not believing; my mind could not realize the thing, and I was no more horrified by the sight than by Burns's description of such things in 'Tam O'Shanter,' though the reality in point of fact leaves the fiction far behind. The monks have a harrowing plan of putting the poor creatures in the morgue into the attitude in which they were found dead in the snow, which of course enhances the ghastly effect. I have a distinct remembrance of one man who stands opposite the window, his arms folded over his stomach, with as *dégagée* an air as if he could step over the way and shake hands with you in a moment: but I am thankful he does not haunt me in my dreams, as perhaps he would some persons.

"After dinner the monk left us. We chatted, I with a German who spoke English, and went to bed. At half-past six in the morning a single knock, heavy and deep like an Oxford dun, and in came through the half-open door the black fool's-cap; it remained a moment, and exit. 'That means I'm to get up,' said I, and up I got. As I was dressing I heard the organ peal at a little distance with fine effect. When I came down the house was clear. All my fellow-voyagers were off. I drank three cups of coffee, and then the monk of yesterday came to show me the place. I was puzzled how to pay him, for you must know that the society is not so rich as it was, and it is the thing for all who can afford it to pay as much as they would at an inn, but no compulsion. However, I watched my opportunity, which soon occurred. The monk was showing me the chapel; I discovered at a distance the 'tronc des aumones.' On this I got my two five-franc pieces in my hand, and as we passed the box, slipped them in with a nothing-at-all sort of air. This, I was afterwards informed, is the *comme il faut* method of doing the thing. I did not buy at Martigny a St. Bernard puppy, because I was *not sure* how you and the mamma would receive it, and *was sure* that I must give a good deal of money for it, without the positive certainty of getting the genuine breed—the puppies at the hospital were all disposed of. As we were going my guide came up to the monk and made a remark, on which the monk patted him on the back, said, '*Ah, coquin!*' and, taking him by the ear, twisted him round a bit,

and gave me to understand (I always use this phrase when I report a Frenchman or a Swiss—it is a safe one) that the fellow wanted to pass for a wit.

“My journey has so far interrupted my pen that I must sign this letter Friday, Geneva. In a day or two I hope to be on my way to Thun and Lucerne. Mr. N—— is in my hotel, looking as stiff, awkward, and conceited as ever. He the living representative of T——! *Ma foi!* A worn-out linen draper’s yard-measure covered with a little worn-out manufactured lace, a miserable mixture of crooked stiffness and graceless frivolity. But I beg pardon. He is a neighbor of yours, and a friend of the Blackstones. Peace be with him, and may he never, by inserting his great stolid countenance in a room where I am at breakfast, provoke me to abuse him, pens, ink and paper, and your attention prepared for better topics. You see I attempt no labored description of mountains. It is impossible. Poets and painters fail to give an adequate or distinct idea of them. That can only be gained by seeing them. The finest mountains I have seen are the Mauvaise Langue, the Dent du Midi, another hill whose name I forget, but nine thousand feet high, and covered with shining ice for a mile at the top, the Aiguilles about Montanvert, and Mont Blanc, from a spot ten miles west of Chamounix, where I confess he looked among his neighbors *qualis inter viburna cupressus*. I shall write soon to my mother, and would of course have written before, but that a traveller’s letters are public property in a family, unless indeed he records the sayings and doings of Frenchwomen, in which case they would be as well confined to the perusal of members of the foul sex in England.

“Your affectionate Son,

CHARLES.

“P.S.—If in consequence of my description you come to Switzerland before I return, do not forget to ask at all the inns in the mountains for Chamois cutlets!”

It was a strange coincidence that some forty years after this visit to the Hospice of St. Bernard was penned, a cousin of the writer, himself a retired officer, should have donned the monkish cowl, and though he did not change his mind quite so rapidly as the soldier tired of war’s alarms, who found the atmosphere of the Alps unpleasantly *vif*, notwithstanding was led to discover that monasti-

cism was not his vocation. The cloister, even the Magdalen cloister, with its Epicurean rule, was never to the taste of our author. From its inception he held the mediævalism of his uncle's nephew, Frederic Faber, in as hearty contempt as Carlyle's earnestness. In 1839, moreover, the ordinary English gentleman knew less than nothing concerning the Roman organization, and although nowadays, to confuse convent with monastery, or to use each word indiscriminately, would argue crass ignorance, at that period it was considered virile to ignore the Roman Church as an effete superstition, awaiting a final *coup de grâce*. George Stanley Faber always spoke of Rome with rude contempt, and his authority was revered at Ipsden as being infallible.

The last letter of the series unfortunately was torn in the opening, so it contains a few unimportant ellipses. It is written in a vein of humor indicative of high spirits, and literally teems with euphuism. Surely never was there a more light-hearted, merry, free-handed young gentleman? In his later years, when life had become well-nigh a burden, and the wild cry arose from lips satiated with success, "Give me back my youth!" his mind reverted in bitter contrast to this golden span of his splendid manhood. Those who knew him, moreover, only after a long acquaintance with the world had superinduced a habit of viewing every one, even his nearest and dearest, with an eye of suspicion, could hardly have imagined how *débonnaire* and simple his natural disposition was. His letter shall give a likeness in miniature of what he was. As thus:

BERNE, *Mercredi, Quatorze.*

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—Amidst mountains and valleys though we may roam, be it ever so level, there's no place like home. Thitherward my face is at length turned, and I think you may expect me, if nothing cross

should happen, in less than a week after receipt of this. I waited more than a week for Mr. Baring's frank at Geneva; it never came, and never will come. However, I have given the Post at Geneva instructions to forward it to Basle, where I hope to be in two days, and whither I sent my luggage from Geneva *par voulage*. I was *au désespoir*, when most unexpectedly some money arrived from Oxford. On this, as I had written to you to send me some to Cologne, I thought I could not do better than leave Geneva, where I was wasting time and money most horribly. I made my little tour through the Oberland, and if I find the money at Cologne, I shall come bravely into port after visiting both Brussels and Antwerp. Mr. Baring's frank I have given up; however, I shall of course leave my direction on paper at the Post-office, Basle, as I did at Geneva, and perhaps about the fall of the leaf the money you so kindly devoted to the least deserving member will flow gently back by some devious channel into the bosom of our family at Ipsden.

"How few people ever dream of thinking for themselves, even in matters of taste, although every language possesses a proverb that hints at the propriety of so doing. Chamounix, the great lion of tourists, is no more to be compared to the Oberland than chalk to sardonyx. I grant that in Savoy one gloomy gorge succeeds to another, wherever you go, in a surprising manner; but there is no contrast, without which all pictures are deficient, and without which all scenes soon become distasteful. Now the Oberland in the first place beats Savoy out of the field with its own weapons. The Jungfrau, Wetterhorn, Silberhorn, etc., being infinitely *grander* than Mont Blanc, which is a great sloping hill that never looks high, because when you are close under it the top is fifteen miles from you, whereas the mountains I have mentioned rise perpendicularly thirteen thousand feet from the very green valley you walk upon, nothing but stone, ice, and everlasting snow. Oh! the walk over the Grunnig to Muhlinen, the first fifteen miles nothing but rock, the last fifteen a broad valley between low hills, bright green from top to bottom, watered with rivulets, and studded with thirty thousand chalets, or picturesque little cowhouses. Then from Muhlinen by the Thuner See, Interlaken, etc., over the Wenghern Alp to the hotel at the foot of the Jungfrau. In this walk the contrast was inverted, and we passed through the relics of the rich valley of Frutigau, walked through groves of walnut-trees, by the side of a lake bluer than the sky. I saw the Staubaek waterfall fall like a horse's tail three hundred and twenty-six feet before it touched the ground. . . . ' *Aujourd'hui nous avons vues les arbres et les fruits, et au présent nous—présent tense, les*

glaciers éternelles ! said my guide as we stopped right opposite the Jungfrau at the door of the Auberge, and at that moment a *ranz des vaches*, sung in full harmony by some Swiss girls, stole over the Wenghern Alp behind us, and made me feel as if I was that moment changed for the first time from a vegetable to an angel. The walks from the Jungfrau to Grindelwald, and from thence to Meyringen—there you have the contrast of juxtaposition, as before of succession, so to speak ; frowning crags on the one side, laughing lawns on the other, all the way. The road lies over grass, and every now and then you pass from the bright, hot sun into a pine-grove, dark as a cavern and cool as a grotto, to emerge, perhaps, when a new mountain may be ready to stare at you here and a new green to smile on you there.

“I have ascended the Righi and the Rothorn, which is much higher ; but the most wonderful scenes are not, in fact, the most thrillingly delightful. I walked from Lucerne to the top of the Righi in four hours and a quarter, in order to win a wager proposed by the Swiss that I could not possibly do it under five hours. The town is eight miles from the bottom of the hill. I am always tired and blown for the first two or three miles in mounting a hill, but get fresher and fresher the further I advance. Coming down kills me, *il faut avouer* ! However, I think with this training I shall be able to walk against the old mule in September. Who shoots ? I have seen one brood of a kind of ptarmigan, and two dead chamois, that is all, in all my excursion. You didn’t say where William thiuks of going if he leaves Ipsden in November. The habitable globe possesses no more delightful spot than Crieff on a fine day, or rather the hill between Crieff and Menzies. When I meet a woman on the road I draw off my tile, and utter sounds to this effect : ‘Guyten daeq yung fr—!’ This is looked for. If you don’t do it you are set down as *un lête Anglais*. I fall easily into the manners of the different nations I pass through, and *find myself invariably the originator of the conversation, whether my neighbor be French, German, or Italian, or English*. I find the foreigners as shy of beginning with us every bit as we are with them. This is not a methodical letter. When I return I will go over my route with you by the aid of Nellie’s map, and point out where I eat and slept. I will show you the scene of any little incident I may have witnessed, and intersperse all with agreeable reflections such as are calculated to combine amusement with instruction. Minds of the higher order will generalize. Have you mentioned in Mr. Baring’s letter whether the game is likely to be plentiful this year ? Probably not. I wonder what made *me* think of such a matter—so trivial !

I am very glad Mr. Blake consents to my visiting his office, and I hope I shall have strength of mind and body to mount a little henceforth in the social world as I have been lately doing in the physical.

“Love to all

Your affectionate Son,

“CHARLES READE.

“P.S.—You do not say whether our little Austrian has come back. I packed up two Swiss songs for her; whether they are either good or new is a glorious uncertainty, because, though I can’t read music, I have got eyes, so selected my ‘chansons’ according to the execution of the vignettes on their backs. Also a shoe-horn made of a chamois’ horn. . . . one or two souvenirs of different places. *Voila tout!* Having now inserted in this letter every phrase, French and German, with which I am acquainted, I think it a proper moment to retire gracefully from public admiration!”

Here follows a pen-and-ink sketch of a traveller, knapsack and alpenstock, bowing his adieux with this added apology :

“Sorry to spoil a work of art. If I had not dried the above with my fingers you would have had to wait another day for the entire communication.”

The “Austrian” alluded to in this letter is clearly his sister Ellinor, a vocalist of some pretensions, who was touring at the time in the Tyrol. The Mr. Baring who failed to frank Mrs. Reade’s letter was probably Mr. Thomas Baring, the head of the firm whose father, Sir Thomas, was for many years one of the firmest friends of the Squire of Ipsden. Being ignorant of how to transmit money abroad—it is doubtful whether circular notes had by then become an institution—Mrs. Reade in all likelihood had requested her great banker friend to manage this for her, but very possibly had omitted, by way of preliminary, to forward him the money, for she was amazingly unpractical. Whether the missing letter ever reached its destination remains a mystery without a clew. We

may be certain, notwithstanding, that son Charles was not a loser to that extent.

The passing allusion to the Ipsden birds, and the parenthetical inquiry, "Who shoots?" tell their own tale. The Ipsden estate ran from Stoke Marmyon, or Littlestoke, the fine old homestead of which is a conspicuous object from the railway bridge over the Thames at Moulsoford, to Stoke-row Common, by Nettlebed. Quite half the estate is arable, and Ipsden farm being one of the most productive of cereals in the county, birds were plentiful, as also hares. The remaining half of the estate is dense beech-wood, with a large rabbit-warren for its centre; and the weird common* where, after Prestonpans, Mary Reade's ill-fated husband, General Mackintosh, took refuge from the pursuing soldiers of King George. Sport, therefore, was a moral certainty, far more so than at present, for whereas the woods now teem with pheasants, there remain but few hares, and the rabbits have been well-nigh exterminated. Partridge-shooting, however, was the specialty of Ipsden, and Charles Reade was as passionately fond of it as his father. An inquiry, therefore, about the birds, in an epistle dated August 14, somewhat emphasizes the writer's opening asseveration that "there's no place like home." Switzerland evidently was all very well, but not after August 31st.

It must be added that Charles Reade shot, as he did everything else of the manly sort, well, but not with abso-

* Called the Scot's Common, because General Mackintosh with his companions encamped there. After three weeks' concealment by his father-in-law, the General's lair was discovered, and he and his comrades bolted over the Downs to Shoreham in Sussex, where they put to sea in a storm, and were drowned. His widow lived and died at Ipsden. The spot is worth a visit.

lute equanimity. Few men bore the mortification of missing a bird with worse grace—at the moment. Ten minutes later the disappointment was forgotten, and he who in the loudest terms would blaspheme all the Fates because a miserable hare escaped destruction, would sit down to luncheon and philosophize, strike extraordinary attitudes, and even dance his favorite double shuffle. The game-keeper, William Johnson, adored “Master Chawse,” and so also, to reveal a secret, did the local poacher, Jack Clayton.

CHAPTER XIII.

CREMONAPHILISM.

DURING the years immediately following his brief tour abroad, Charles Reade oscillated between London, Ipsden, and Scotland. It is a matter for regret that we possess the most meagre details only of his tours. He was a great pedestrian, and withal preferred to carry his gun. The Thames, moreover, in which his father owned a large eyot, with sundry fishing rights, had made him a fisherman—to his cost, be it added, for it is a fact that he was unwise enough to risk a few hundreds when they could ill be spared from his exchequer in a herring-fishery venture, which was far from proving a financial success.

It was his habit in those early days of railways to avoid the trouble both of packing up, carrying luggage, and forming plans an hour in advance, by keeping a complete outfit at different points of the compass. He provided himself with a wardrobe on a really lavish scale at Oxford ; a second and similar outfit for Ipsden, where his chamber was held sacred to his sole use ; and a third for his lodgings in town. Thus he could appear at any one of these points without a shred of luggage, and a very pleasant arrangement it was for a gentleman who never quite knew his own mind. Moreover, the telegraph was not then in the land, and railway travelling without luggage is robbed of half its terrors. He felt bored with Leicester Square. What more sensible than to drive to Paddington, run down to Moul-

ford, and walk across to the paternal mansion? Oxford with its dons and duns wearied him. What better than to stroll over Magdalen Bridge, put his best leg forward, and by degrees pass Nuneham, Dorchester, Shillingford, and Crowmarsh, until at length the glorious beech-woods greeted his eye from White Hill, and he felt himself at home? Or mayhap the Squire's temper was ruffled, or his mother forgot to be quite as fondling as usual. Then how simple to order the carriage at a moment's notice, drive to Reading and catch the express, which in three quarters of an hour would land him in the metropolis?

His lodgings in the vicinity of Leicester Square were a curiosity. He had developed a craze for violins, and these instruments, with rosin and catgut in profusion, lay strewed about the floor, in combination with articles of wearing-apparel, books, and playbills. To one entering the rooms, however, the most startling phenomenon was what we may term their *fauna*. The whole place was alive with squirrels, who bolted up the curtains, and seemed to enjoy themselves as in their native beech-woods at Ipsden. It was from this coigne of vantage that Charles Reade sallied forth in quest of character. Dickens had rapidly built up a reputation by reproducing oddities, and it would seem that our author, when he first began to dream dreams of authorship, imagined that the short-cut to literary success was to pick up and photograph some human porcupine. In after-years, as we know, he attached far more importance to construction than to character; but in early life, like Jerrold, Albert Smith, and the rest of what may be termed the Dickens school, he felt the fascination of inimitable character delineation, and it is a fact that in his researches among the by-ways of humanity he not only disguised himself, but studied low life. It was probably while thus

in quest of the odd and angular that he encountered a craftsman learned in the art of fiddle-making, a being, moreover, with as keen a scent for the habitat of a rare violin as the truffle-dog for the fungus beneath the roots of trees. Whether this man were a Belgian or a Frenchman is uncertain. Enough that he had devoted his life to the violin, not merely as a maker, but as a virtuoso, and by his long connection with the trade in Paris had acquired positive knowledge of where, throughout the world, all the rarest violins were to be discovered. Between him and Charles Reade there existed for a time a sort of partnership, and that he initiated his patron into the mysteries of the craft may be inferred from the following anecdote :

Charles Reade was journeying from Scotland to London, and as was his wont through life, even in the days when he was far from rich, travelled first-class. The way was long, and to relieve its tedium he fell into conversation with his *vis-à-vis*, an individual in every way prepossessing. After a while the desultory chatter accidentally turned on fiddles, and the stranger remarked, *passim*, that he possessed one by a particular maker.

"Then," smiled Charles Reade knowingly, "I have the honor of addressing Lord ——?"

The stranger shook his head.

"No?" echoed our author. "In that case you must be Colonel ——?"

The stranger at once confessed that the surmise was correct, but asked how, in the name of wonder, he came thus to be able to detect his identity.

"Because," said Charles Reade, "there are only two violins of the maker you name in this country. Lord —— has one, you the other." In a memorandum among Charles

Reade's papers we find a casual allusion to the Cremona violin as "a worthless thing," whereof, so he writes, I was "the first connoisseur in England," from which we infer that he lived to regret the time and money he had expended on the cult of fiddles.

This fancy for fiddles had one disastrous effect—it led to a temporary disagreement between the clever son and his fine old father, the Squire. Ipsden House is the ancient manor-house. The mansion built by Thomas Reade for his daughter on her marriage with Mr. Vachell was pulled down in the last century, at the time when the timber of the park was sold to pacify the mortgagees, and the park itself was ploughed up. The Squire of that era converted the old manor-house into a mansion by adding to and altering it. The whole is an architectural *olla podrida*, and to render it more incongruous, as has been narrated, Charles Reade's mother, when she came from Court to play *châtelaine* therein, induced her husband to paint the good old brick a garish white. Now the Squire was a martinet as regards order. When, therefore, son Charles imported from London or Paris violins, and, further, thought fit to convert his bed-chamber into a fiddle manufactory, all Ipsden House knew that there was the chance of a storm, not to say a cyclone.

However, as the Squire never dreamed of poking his nose into every corner of the house, this little eccentricity might have been hidden from him, albeit the odors of varnish are themselves rather telltale. Unfortunately, son Charles, the very genius of domestic disorder, was so imprudent as to try his combination of amber on the window-sill of his bedroom, which happened to face the carriage-drive.

The effect can easily be imagined. Not only did the sill present a surface of different shades of brown in hid-

eous patches, but the white walls of the house also were streaked with these umber fluids. The Squire saw this, and exploded with indignation. What he said has not been handed down to posterity. It must have been sufficiently disagreeable, for his son Charles went off to London in a huff, and thence to Paris. Moreover, to emphasize his displeasure at the paternal rebuke, he did not communicate by letter or otherwise with Ipsden House for more than six months.

His father bore this philosophically; not so his fond mother, who fretted and fumed and was quite half inclined to quarrel with her husband. However, at last filial affection reasserted its sway. A letter arrived, and was responded to by an urgent request that he would reappear as though nothing had happened. This he did, and so the ugly episode ended.

That his penchant for violins, which at this period of his life amounted to an overpowering passion, was a serious matter may be inferred from the subjoined. One smiles to view him in the light of a tradesman—a part he of all men was least qualified to play. Suffice it that he left behind no ledger, no balance-sheet, no record of transactions—for the simple reason that he kept none.

The following Petition to the Lords of the Treasury is headed, in his MSS.,

“HOW CHARLES READE WROTE BEFORE HE WAS A
WRITER.”

His literary evolution, we perceive from internal evidence, was now virtually complete. The nine years intervening between 1839 and 1848 had made the mere scribbler a master of English. He takes up the cudgels in self-defence with characteristic vigor, and the narrative of fact

needs no comment. It tells its own story, as Charles Reade alone could tell it :

"I import old Italian and German Violins as Merchandise, paying the Queen's dues, although the profits of this trade are so precarious that I am the only importing Merchant in England. I have of late encountered in the Custom-House a spirit of extortion which many candid persons think misapplied to articles of vertu having a mere speculative value. For some time I have seen that I should have to Petition your Lordships for the protection of my oppressed trade. The case that at last brings me before you is this.

"About three months ago, I being occupied in London, there arrived for me at Southampton a case containing a Violoncello and the carcasses of some twenty old violins. My Southampton Agent wrote to me for a valuation. He did not think it necessary to send me the number of the Articles, nor had I an invoice or inventory. I sent down a valuation £50. If I had seen the Goods landed myself I should have valued them about £80. I value upon a system, viz., about £4 a-piece for the carcasses of these third and fourth rate Italian violins. They are worth no more, because it costs £2 of English work and of materials that have paid duty in other hands to make one of these carcasses into a playable, salable instrument.

"A London Officer went down to see the goods. This man is a superficial Smatterer upon a deep and difficult subject. He is in that state of quarter knowledge in which men are sure to fall into more dangerous errors than when they know nothing at all.

"He began (*on dit*) by telling the Southampton Officers that I had valued my goods at one sixth of their just value. He next observed that he would give £200 for them himself: here was already a fluctuation of thirty-three and one-third per cent. in this loose-tongued valuation.

"The next oscillation, as chance would have it, was £250. On this it appears my Goods were stopped.

"Informed by my Agent that I was said to have undervalued to so fraudulent an extent, I was astounded. In order to get to some understanding of what they were saying, I sent down Mr. John Lott, an intelligent workman, to examine the case. He left me expecting to find a Bass that has paid duty before, and some fifteen or sixteen fresh Violins. He found instead the said Bass and some twenty-two Violins and tenors; but

amongst the latter he recognized one or two that, like the Bass, had been in the Country before, and paid duty at the same port.

"I petitioned the Honorable Board of Commissioners, as is usual, and this was the line of my Petition.

"I frankly admitted the Goods were undervalued according to my own system of valuation, through an error that merely respected the number of articles; but, on the other hand, I affirmed that the London Officer's valuation was extravagantly false, and of this I besought their Honors to admit sound evidence, viz., the judgment of the only competent persons in the Kingdom—experienced London Dealers.

"And I petitioned to be allowed to amend my valuation, presuming that competent evidence should remove that impression of excessive undervaluation which hitherto rested on one incompetent witness.

"The Board's reply was, 'the Goods to be dealt with.' But it was my fortune to catch a glimpse of a Document by which I learned the basis of their Honors' decision was actually the London Officer's Estimate, £250, accepted in full with all the respect due to a competent connoisseur. My way of arguing is to begin with the points of Agreement. I agree with the Honorable Board that if £250 is the true value of the Violin carcases detained at Southampton, there is no room for my explanation on the ground of error, the difference between £50 and £250 is too great.

"On the other hand, if I should prove £250 to be as wide of the mark one way as £50 is the other, and without the same excuse, I have a right to presume, on the principle, '*Sublatâ causâ tollitur effectus*,' that the Commissioners would feel disposed, did it rest with them, to resign the unusual course into which they have been led by a natural error. I have not lost my confidence in that Honorable Board's justice when properly informed; but something more than they can tell me it is necessary for me to learn.

"It is not only the fate of a single consignment, but of an entire though small branch of commerce that now depends upon your Lordships.

"To this innocent little commerce, profitable in a high proportion to the Revenue, and what is singular in an import trade, *the only stay at the same time* of the English Workman, terms are now offered that evade by a trick the limits set by the tariff statute. They are terms under which the import trade cannot maintain any existence at all; this is my best excuse for the tedious length at which I am compelled by the difficulties of my subject to address your Lordships.

"The valuation (£250) I attack rests upon nothing but the dictum of

one solitary individual, an employé in the Custom-House, supposed by the Commissioners to have thoroughly mastered in his moments of leisure a subject twice as deep, delusive, and difficult as that of ancient paintings, and six times as delusive as any third business that exercises the critical powers of man.

"My Lords, this is so far from being true that it is impossible; it is an impossibility well known to every Gentleman and Tradesman that knows anything about the matter.

"There is no ploughboy in this nation who can square the circle when he has unharnessed his team, and there is no amateur of violins who can set the just value upon the peculiar varieties in one of my consignments.

"The Rational Amateur who has bought true violins at authentic sources knows something; knowing something, he knows his incapacity to tell the makes and values of third and fourth rate specimens. It is only the mere ignorant dreamer of the class who has not arrived to know even his own ignorance.

"I would gladly evade the almost impossible task of trying to give your Lordships any idea of the depth, variety, and difficulty of this kind of vertu.

"I fear I shall be very tiresome; I entreat your Lordships' patience whilst I attempt to explain the misty principles that govern the high value of things worth in reality next to nothing.

"Since the year 1814, when men first arose that studied the principles on which a violin should be constructed to sound well, the reputation of old fiddles for tone has been justly shaken, and is now known by two thirds of the world to be no longer sound, although it was sound between the years 1750 and 1814; for during that interval no Fiddle Maker existed in Europe capable of constructing a violin. At present there are more scientific and intelligent Fiddle Makers than ever existed at Cremona.

"Still, all the intelligence of the present day has failed to discover one secret possessed by Italy and Germany up to 1750, and lost to the whole world about that time, viz., the secret of fusing amber and making a varnish of oil, said amber, and soluble gums, red, brown, or yellow, but absolutely transparent. This varnish, pretty in itself, and prettier in an old violin, because the wear and use of a century gives it light and shade and picturesque forms, constitutes the only real reason why from £5 to £400 is given for musical instruments that in beauty of wood and in sound can always be matched for thirty shillings from the immense mass of new violins open to the public.

"If old violins have any fixed merit it is their appearance. We are, in

fact, agreed that, in a word, it is their wood which sets off their varnish, and their varnish which sets off their wood. But where the amateur is of necessity thrown out is here—he is not in a position to estimate the value of names—what he is led to suppose a fixed merit can only be bought and sold as such under the domineering influence of names.

“Merit never comes to bear until first filtered through the consideration of name. If then a Man looks at twenty old fiddles, the merits of which he can see, but does not know who made each and how that Maker ranks in the Market—where is he? and what is he? A sailor on the wide Pacific without a compass or a star is not more the sport of water and wind than such a man as this is of flighty dreams and of brute chance.

“Your Lordships may depend on the following selection out of a thousand parallel facts :

“No. 1. A Violin by Joseph Guarnerius of Cremona with plain wood and pale varnish, worth therefore only £70.

“No. 2. A Violin by Joseph Guarnerius, with handsome wood and red varnish, worth therefore £200.

“No. 3. Violin, Joseph Guarnerius, fine wood, red varnish, and without a crack, £300.

“No. 4. Violin, Carlo Bergonzi of Cremona, finer wood and varnish than No. 2, worth £40.

“No. 5. Carolus Ferdinandus Landolpis of Milan, same wood and varnish as No. 4, worth £7.

“No. 6. Violin, Dominica Montagnano of Venice, worth £3.

“No. 7. Violin, Dominica Montagnano, finer wood and varnish than No. 3, worth £8.

“No. 8. An ugly broken-down fiddle, Amatus of Cremona, £25.

“No. 9. A fine specimen. Ditto. £40.

“No. 10. A finer still by his pupil, Francesco Rugger, £14.

“No. 11. A finer still, Giudantus of Florence, £12.

“No. 12. A finer still, Sanctus Serafin of Venice, £10.

“No. 13. An equally fine, Gatenari of Florence, £8.

“No. 14. A good-looking violin, Grancina of Milan, £6.

“No. 14. A better Levazza, Milan, £4.

“No. 15. Carlo Bergonzi, average, £15.

“No. 16. Matteo Gioffriller of Venice, twice as fine, and not distinguishable by an Amateur from the same make, worth £5.

“No. 17. The entire School of Venice, equal in merit to that of Cremona, and possessed of quite as fine a varnish, but worth in the market 800 per cent. less.

“I put it to yourselves, my Lords, whether anything short of real, tangi-

ble, critical knowledge can guide a valuer through a labyrinth of which this is only the first turn.

"Ask an Amateur how many names he knows, and he will quote you about eight names; ask him to write down upon paper the nice little distinctions and details of work by which he is to know even these few at sight, he cannot do it: even this first page of a profound study is beyond him. Why cannot he write them down on paper? because he has not really got them in his eye and his brain ready for use.

"Now what will your Lordships think when I tell you that, instead of eight or ten, one hundred and eighty Makers are known to have worked in Italy alone, and to have used that amber varnish which, seen by a dreamer, is straightway taken by him for a proof of one of those eight or ten valuable varieties. Of these one hundred and eighty more than one half are beneath the real connoisseur's notice; but he knows more than sixty, familiarly knows them at sight, knows their work, their style, and their value, and he knows them too positively to confound the other one hundred and twenty with them.

"But this knowledge requires a rare combination of talent and opportunity. It demands a fine Eye, a strong memory, a clear head, the constant practice of examining the insides as well as outsides of hundreds of Specimens, and, above all, to have invested thousands of pounds in the trade; for no judgment can be formed except by risking loss as well as gain upon it hundreds of times.

"This is why none but an experienced Dealer ever was a real Connoisseur, nor ever will be as long as this world shall last.

"Now without the above advantages any person of mere general intelligence and taste for old violins would be sure to overvalue my consignments for this plain reason—I am a great connoisseur, and when I buy violins of low name and value do buy what?—not poor specimens of them, but of course the finest specimens of them, which are little dearer than the poorer ones. Now the *chefs-d'œuvre* of a £4 maker are really finer, and often much finer, than the average of a £40 Maker, or even of an £100 Maker.

"The Amateur has no idea of this, so when he sees a fine thing, he argues backwards that it must be by a valued Maker. The tendency of this error is clear: the value of it is far beyond calculation. Once begin ascribing my goods to the narrow list of names known even by rote in the City, or valuing them as they would sell if they could but come under that narrow list of names, and a thousand per cent. over-valuation is an easy

natural result. That result, my Lords, has once actually occurred to me and from the same quarter.

"There are three classes of persons in and about this class of vertu :

"1. The connoisseur, who must have been many years a practised dealer.

"2. The respectable intelligent Amateur, who has bought at their true prices true violins of responsible Dealers or under judgment of such.

"3. The Dreamer, who is always on the lookout for chances that imply a contradiction in terms, such as 'to pick up' (that is his phrase) a highly valuable fiddle for a little money.

"He is capable of abusing understanding to such an extent as this.

"He knows that certain old violins fetch high prices only because they are excessively rare, that if not excessively rare they could not be so valuable, that could they by a miracle cease to be excessively rare they must then cease to be valuable, and yet he no sooner sees a flock of gray geese come over the water than he says, 'Behold a flock of black swans,' and he winds up a pretty piece of Idiocy by valuing the varieties that it seems have become as common as dirt to please him at the value they had before they became common.

"It is his ground of faith that every good-looking old violin which comes here is Cremonese, and that every Cremonese is highly valuable, and can find a purchaser at once, like silks or brandy.

"Estimate the Haze in which these babblers are lost before they take their first step.

"Of Foreign Fiddles carrying an appearance of value to these Smatterers, thirty out of forty are not Italian even, but French and German; out of the Italian ones, thirty-six out of forty are not Cremonese, but made at Parma, Mantua, Padua, Verona, Turin, Livorno, Florence, Naples, Rome, Venice, Milan, and other Italian towns, and in towns and villages of the Tyrol; of the Cremonese, which alone carry high price, some are by unpriized makers and have little value. Two makers alone could make sure, upon anything like a forced sale, of fetching more than £15, and these, in fact, are the only true property or secure investment. Need I add that my case contains no single specimen of the rarer class.

"I have to complain of a valuation that proceeds on three broad and grave errors :

"1. An error critical, immense exaggeration of the importance of the specimens.

"2. A suppression or omission of a heavy drawback on the value of my goods, under the only title that brings them beneath the Tariff at all.

"You are to understand that my carcasses and scrolls of violins are caught hold of by the Customs as Musical Instruments of Foreign manufacture. This is not strictly true. They are, in point of fact, Foreign articles of vertu, and Foreign materials for English Manufacture of Musical Instruments.

"Before I can make these carcasses into Musical Instruments what must I do? Why, my Lords, I must go to a French importing House, and buy the following materials and accessories that have already accounted with the Customs in their hands, viz.:

- 20 Necks made of Harewood, 4s. a-piece.
- 80 Ebony pegs.
- 20 Ebony Finger-boards.
- 20 do Tail-pieces.
- 20 Bridges.
- 80 Strings.

This done, I must engage with an English Workman to take off the bellies of every carcass except the Bass; to cut out the old Bass Bars which will not support the modern system of tuning a violin; to shape and glue new bass bars; to open and clean and glue all the cracks in those twenty carcasses and secure them with pieces; to shape and fit the necks to the scrolls and to the carcasses; to shape and fit the finger-boards to the necks; to cut and fit the bridges to each Instrument respectively; to strengthen the bellies of one half of them inside with pieces, carefully and laboriously; to string them up.

"To recut a Maggiui tenor, not salable in England unless recut—this alone is a £5 job.

"This drawback, my Lords, is at least £45; most workmen would expect £60 for it. Now this drawback has not been fairly put before the Honorable Commissioners by the Pseudo-Valuer, and it is a very grave suppression; one effect of it is just this: A piece of stuff is valued by anticipation as high as all the garments to be made here out of that stuff and supplied with linings and accessories. The other effect of it will be treated elsewhere. And here I throw myself with confidence upon the honor of the Commissioners of the Customs. Let them say, 'Was this drawback placed before them in *figures*?' If not, the present valuation is rotten for want of detail on one whole side.

"But I would fain go farther, and ask even another question, and I throw myself upon the honor of the Board, and in particular Sir Thomas

Fremantle for the answer. Was it impressed upon the Board that my goods are violins, etc., that could be sold at all to Violin Players upon being cleared, or was the impression left that they are mere carcasses, broken carcasses, which could only be sold to the speculating Dealer?

"If the former impression has been left with the Board, their Judgment has been fraudulently obtained; if the latter, we come by another road to what I said three months ago, and say now, that the Dealers and Workmen are the only men who can value these battered carcasses.

"Oh! my Lords, if you or the Commissioners would only condescend to look at the things, you or they would see how shamefully they have been imposed upon in this respect. Just see how the Commissioners have backed and filled before they could drift into their false valuation. They take the population of England at 15,000,000. This population has at its left extremity 14,999,975 persons who would say, and with reason, on looking at my goods, 'Rubbish, not worth £10;' at its right a few practical judges capable of saying for what (although really worth nothing) they would sell through the caprice of a small clique. The Commissioners with their left hand set aside the 14,999,975, including themselves, on the plea of ignorance; then, instead of carrying out their idea, they wheel about, and with the right hand set aside all who have real competent knowledge, and so we get rid with one gesture of Common-sense, with a reverse gesture we lose specific knowledge and arrive at a fool's paradise.

"I come to Error 3. This is an error that arises out of not knowing the violin trade—it is an important error, because

'The value of a thing
Is never more than it will bring.'

The error principally consists in the use of false analogies to supply the want of specific knowledge. There is only one other trade from which any light can be thrown upon the old violin trade, and that is the Picture Trade. By keeping this sister trade out of sight, and by drawing one's notions, as a Custom-House Officer naturally would, from silks, linens, watches, cotton, one is sure to go sixty or seventy per cent. out of the true reckoning. The Buyers of other Merchandise are so numerous that one can always be found if the Proprietor will set a moderate price. But here it is the reverse. The public buyers are so few that it is impossible to secure at any given period the profitable sale of a single violin, much less twenty. The very idea of selling twenty fiddles at the same time, without losing money by them, could never have entered the heads of one who

knows this miserable trade. The whole annual trade of London in old Italian violins hardly amounts to twenty *bonâ fide* sales; most of the sales neutralize one another, No. 1 coming back to the Dealer in part exchanged for No. 2, and No. 2 for No. 3.

“Upon anything like a forced sale—such as with satins, silks, etc., might only entail a loss of fifteen or twenty per cent.—the loss upon violins would be three or four hundred per cent. in many cases, incalculable in others, ruinous in all.

“Any one who knows the trade knows there is but one way of selling violins without being ruined by them, and that is to deposit them in shops, and wait quietly one, two, three, four, six, fifteen, twenty years, until a customer’s caprice happens to give an opportunity of selling to advantage. It is under the title of a Valuer that a man exists who leaves the business or heaviness of return out of his calculation of average value.

“It seems odd that two Men should differ as to the meaning of so simple a phrase as this—for every £100, £10 Tariff. Yet we do. The Pseudo-Valuer says the Legislature demands of me £10 on the 1st of August, 1848, for every £100 I shall receive upon the 1st of August, 1851. I say No, that is not £10 in a given £100, but £10 out of a £100 mutilated by the loss of three years’ interest and compound interest; and it was intended by the Legislature that for every £10 I pay the Customs on the 1st of August I should be able to get £100 before the end of the month, or if I must wait for three years on the average, should in that case get more than £100, and considerably more.

“In this paper, my Lords, it is not my intention to ask of your Lordships any other favor than Justice, or rather a chance of Justice. There is nothing against me, my consignment of Goods, or the future existence of my trade, but a false statement made by an ignorant Monomaniac, and colored partly to his wishes and partly by the suggestions of private speculation. I ask to be permitted to bring that statement to some satisfactory test; it is not for me to decide the manner, but I hope it will be the examination upon oath of persons in the trade. Do not think that I am even then in a better position than I deserve. There is no person in the trade whose interest is identical with mine; there are one or two who would do me an injury if they could—there is one who at this moment is amusing himself with writing anonymous letters, filled with malicious falsehoods against me. Do you think, my Lords, I would not rather fall into the hands of even this fellow than of a mad Babbler about this kind of trade? Certainly; because a limit can be placed to such a man by examination

on Oath; but ignorance cannot be modified. Malice is a blackguard, but Ignorance is a Wild Beast.

"The mighty favor I beg, my Lords, is, that my goods may be valued by a body of Men who are my rivals, or would be if they could; and I beg this favor, my Lords, on the high grounds of truth and justice.

"If an appeal to Cæsar could make all proceedings pause in the most distant Roman province, I hope an appeal to Truth and Justice cannot fail to create a pause and consideration here in England, especially when that appeal comes direct to the rulers of the people. I appeal by name to the Right Honorable Lord John Russell to give Truth and Justice a chance by giving them a bare hearing—that hearing which is their right and mine has been up to this moment refused to them and me.

"I, a Merchant, though a small one, appeal to Lord John Russell by name as a great patron of commerce.

"That great Gentleman is also appealed to by a small and unfortunate gentleman, who declares upon his sacred honor that the proceedings about to take place are unjust, ridiculous upon all grounds of Public Government, originating in a blind greediness, that, carried out, would destroy the Revenue by crushing trade, and approved by Commissioners upon the crass *ipse dixit* of an uninformed, isolated, unconscientious Man, who has not been examined on Oath, or cross-examined; whose previous false, insane, extravagant, and fraudulent valuations of similar property are known to everybody but to the Commissioners, and shall be proved and attested by the Oaths of numerous disinterested persons whenever your Lordships or the Board of Commissioners are disposed to know the truth, instead of guessing at a distance through a haze of illusory circumstances and babbling dreams.

"And so, my Lords, I come to you and humbly beg for that which in most situations an Englishman can demand, Inquiry. Without Inquiry, Justice has not the shadow of the Ghost of a chance, especially in my case; by Inquiry I mean Examination on Oath and Cross-examination.

"My Lords, my fate is in your hands, and as God is my Judge, my commerce lives or perishes at a word from your lips.

"I am the last Importer left—I can maintain my ground under the ten per cent. duty. No other man in England can: the best proof is, no other man attempts it as a Merchant. But once begin to tamper with that ten per cent. duty by over-valuation, once substitute by sleight-of-hand twenty-seven per cent., which in its honest English is what the Custom-House proposes to me in Thieves' Latin, and your Lordships, in point of fact, prohibit a patriotic Commerce.

"You, my Lords, would not do such a thing; but in order not to do it you must actually interfere and prevent the Custom-House from doing it.

"The matter is now before you, my Lords, and from this hour whatever is done, is done not by Subordinates, but by the Government, on the well-known principles of Her Majesty's present Government.

"I throw myself now, and I shall again throw myself on them in my document No. 2, in the course of which I shall show you why my commerce—*unlike every other in the World*—contains in itself no principle of protection against the private fraudulent speculations of Custom-House Officers. At present I conclude by earnestly imploring the bare preliminary justice of a *bonâ fide* inquiry into the marketable value of a particular Consignment, and the state and capabilities of the trade.

"And I hereby petition your Lordships to forbid the sale by Custom-House Auction of my Goods until the false evidence at present before the Commissioners has been brought to the touchstone of Cross-examination, and compared with a mass of Evidence upon Oath, by which I am prepared to compute it."

It may seem strange that a Fellow of Magdalen, not without ambition or industry, and gifted by nature with commanding talent, should have embraced the law as a profession merely to abandon it. Charles Reade, in his undergraduate days, as his friend Canon Bernard Smith testifies, always imagined himself a limb of the law, and there is one pointed reference to his profession in his letter to his father. Nevertheless, he resigned himself contentedly to a *dolce far niente* style of existence, though never even in his idlest moments did he cease to be a student. In his papers we discover a rather embittered confession of what he terms baldly a wasted youth; and it is almost certain that when he selected the title, "It is Never too Late to Mend" for the book he then considered his *chef-d'œuvre*, it was his own career that suggested the well-worn proverb. "I made notes," he writes in a singular vein of self-reproach, "but I never wrote a book for the public till

I was thirty-five. Then, at an age when most men's habits are fixed, I began my real life."

From this we glean that he did not actually put pen to paper seriously before 1850, in which and the succeeding year he labored hard to make up for lost ground. "I wrote," he says, "first for the stage—about thirteen dramas which nobody would play."

Before we approach what we will term, in his own phraseology, his real life, we will glance once more at his butterfly existence.

It will not unnaturally occur to the mind of the observant that such a man as Charles Reade, a handsome and *débonnaire* gentleman, acceptable in society, with distinguished manners and powers of conversation amounting almost to fascination, must have been influenced once, if not more than once, by the fair sex. He preferred ladies' society to men's even in his earliest days, and most assuredly had never any cause of complaint on the score of neglect or coldness from women both clever and attractive. At home he did not encounter a superabundance of society of any kind. The deaths of their three eldest sons and of their beautiful and brilliant daughter, Julia, saddened the Squire and his vivacious wife, and caused them to avoid society so far as their position rendered such avoidance possible. His sister Ellinor, however, had her circle of friends, who visited Ipsden at chronic intervals. It would be erroneous, therefore, to suggest that Charles Reade kept quite clear of the tender passion. But whatever he may have felt or wished, circumstances had stamped him as a non-marrying man. Marriage would have deprived him of that small competence he valued so dearly—his fellowship at Magdalen. True, he might have married money, but it may be affirmed safely, that had he married at all,

it would have been from a different and higher motive. As a matter of plain fact, the alliance he may secretly have coveted was, for pecuniary reasons, an impossibility. He realized this, and never permitted himself to drift into a false position. What might have happened had he been endowed with independence, it is not quite difficult to surmise. His dependence on the college was perhaps his misfortune, since it interposed a barrier between him and the one lady whom in the best days of his manhood he idealized, and never forgot, even in his dying moments. It was, perhaps, the inability to marry in accordance with his inclination that kept him clear of all matrimonial ideas of any kind. Yet he was very charming, and, without knowing it, became the centre of any coterie. With the loss of his lively presence the family circle soon gloomed over, and it must be added that, if a favorite with the elders, he was adored by his juniors of either sex. At Ipsden, in the holiday time, his sister Julia's only son and daughter, and his brother Compton's eldest son and daughter were regular visitors, and being much of the same age, formed a pleasant quartette.

"Boys," said he, one dull afternoon to his two nephews, "shall I take you out shooting, or sing you some songs?"

The boys gave discordant answers. "Shoot," cried young Allen Gardiner, then fresh from Harrow. "Sing," pleaded the other.

"There," said Charles Reade, with prophetic solemnity, "is an index of the future of both you fellows."

He was right. Young Allen became a roving missionary in South America, and his other nephew joined the choir of Magdalen.

He seemed, moreover, to enjoy at that time the society of these nephews and nieces; indeed, on one occasion he

deserted his beloved Paris to meet them, and grumbled persistently for a week at our English climate. Not that he was in the least degree ungracious to the young people. On the contrary, he brought down a complete set of archery for their amusement, sang them all his songs, and in the evening wrote comic verses to make them laugh. Of his nieces, and especially of his niece Anna, afterwards Mrs. R. A. J. Drummond, he was more than fond, a thoroughly attentive cavalier. Looking back on these halcyon days, his relatives, or rather those that survive, might well feel that his singular amiability and good-nature more than atoned for the inaction he so poignantly regretted; for after he began to slave at literature, and to hunger for approbation, he developed an irritability to which previously he had been a stranger. Success changed him—certainly in respect of manner, sympathy, and predilection, though the alteration was mainly on the surface. This was, perhaps, inevitable. Had he remained a mere butterfly he would have escaped exertion and its results, but his life would have been wholly ruined. It is a fact, none the less, that toil hardens most men's natures, whereas ease has the contrary effect.

It is remarkable also how rapidly labor aged him. As late as 1853, when he walked in the solemn procession of doctors and dons to the Sheldonian theatre to witness the installation of the late Lord Derby as Chancellor of the University, the query passed from mouth to mouth, "Who can that very juvenile doctor be?" and reached the ear of his fond sister Ellinor, who was the guest of the venerable Doctor Macbride, at Magdalen Hall. In 1845 he was in the very prime of manhood. Then it was that at Liverpool he hit Alfred Mynn, the Spofforth of the period, round the field, and his scores not seldom ran up three figures. His

prowess in the art of throwing a casting-net was extraordinary, and he excelled in every manly sport he took up, including archery, bowls, and skittles. There was a very pretty skittle-alley in the groom's yard of Magdalen College, and another in the Grove; and the college groom, with his stable helpers, used to find plenty of employment when Charles Reade happened to be in residence. Paris could not make a *petit-maître* of such essentially virile material. Town, with its pleasures, failed to render his fibre effeminate. He ate largely, drank very sparingly—for the most part cold water and tea—took a superabundance of exercise, and lived very much the life of Lord Beaconsfield's typical aristocrat, who was perpetually in the open air, and never opened a book.

This last, however, applied to him in the comparative degree only, for he read between his amusements, and at forty boasted a mind more largely stored with the treasures of English literature than that of any among his academical contemporaries. At that period Oxford had gone crazed about mediævalism and black letter. Theology was its one topic—if we except architecture; and students who had fathomed the recondite mysteries of ogees, awmbries, corbels, and crockets were ignorant of Massinger, if not of Milton. A bookworm like Mozley plodded to some purpose, for he was not merely antiquarian, but realistic. Yet, after all, where Mozley had one reader, Charles Reade could boast ten thousand. The one appealed to a very limited circle, the other to the widest and most lasting. The one taught *more Magistri*, in parables, *alias* dramas; the other by sermons, *alias* essays. Nobody desires to speak of Professor Mozley otherwise than with the respect his antlike industry and profound sincerity deserves; but when an eminent public writer thought fit to quote Moz-

ley as an exemplar of all that was admirable in Magdalen, and to fling a sneer at the one Magdalen Fellow of that epoch whose fame is in the least degree likely to outlast this century, he evinced a lack of appreciation which unfortunately is only too common to academic natures.

It was perhaps inevitable that a virile specimen of manhood enhanced by genius should be half scorned in a place where mental virility was unknown, and pedantry passed for talent. It was inevitable also that such a man, with all the warmth of youth adhering to him, should be idolized in the domestic circle. "We will use our brains," he would say after tea in the lovely summer evenings, lovelier nowhere within these four seas than at glorious Ipsden, "we will use our brains." And so the whole family clustered round him with paper and pencils, and scribbled verses of all sorts in competition. Some few of these poetical essays were preserved, including those of Charles Reade; but, needless to add, they are not worth reproduction.

It was characteristic, moreover, of the man who in after-years was laughed at because his plays, forsooth, were always "so very good!" *i. e.*, based on sound morality, that neither Oxford, Paris, nor London could spoil his natural and graceful simplicity. At forty he was quite half a boy; at forty-five he played at cricket with the old zest; at sixty-eight he entered heartily into tennis. His natural spring was surprising, and enabled him, when in middle age he took up his pen in right good earnest, to wield that weapon as Mercury and not as Saturn. "Pick yourself out, my good chap," was his advice to his nephew when the cob he was riding rolled in a pond, rider and all. And this advice, later on, he applied to his own case. The

time came when labor was no longer a matter of choice, but of necessity, and he then demonstrated clearly that as of yore he had played so could he work. His Pegasus pitched him into the mud, and his wit pulled him out.

CHAPTER XIV.

PARIS AND IPSDEN.

THE Revolution of 1848 surprised Charles Reade in Paris, and the conduct of its leading spirits, whereof he was an unwilling eye-witness, caused him, in "Christie Johnstone," to style the French Assembly "a den of wild beasts fed on *cau sucrée*."

The subsequent horrors of the *coup d'état* have almost obliterated, as in some measure they eclipsed, those of the antecedent revolution which expelled the citizen king, who sought refuge on English soil as Mr. Smith. Moreover, the special reporter was an institution not then invented, and although the *Times* gave graphic descriptions of the scenes at the barricades, the English public were informed of but a tithe of what occurred. At the moment Compton happened to have a house at Hampstead, and thitherward one evening, weary and flustered, his author brother hurried to relieve the pent-up feelings of his relatives. The *Times* had narrated with fidelity the strong anti-English feeling prevalent among the intoxicated Republicans, and it is a simple fact that a massacre of our countrymen was considered imminent. The Republic wished to consecrate its birth by a holocaust of harmless guests, and it is marvellous that this vile project was not carried into execution. We can only compare the apprehension of those who then had friends in Paris to that evoked nine years later by the tidings of the Indian Mutiny.

"My dear Charles," cried his brother, as he welcomed him eagerly, "you have had a narrow escape of your life!"

"I have," replied Charles, solemnly; "they put me into a damp bed at Boulogne."

Canon Bernard Smith relates that the one study Charles Reade devoted himself to with passionate energy during his undergraduate career was paradox. That may account for this glib rejoinder.

As a matter of fact his life was in danger, and from something far more dangerous than damp. He was lodging over a barber's shop in close proximity to one of the barricades where the fighting was fiercest, and had the barber dropped the faintest hint that an Englishman was concealed on his premises, the wild beasts of the pavement, with the blood-instinct hot upon them, would have dragged him forth to torture and death. The barber, however, was his very stanch friend. When he persisted in going out to catch a glimpse of the fun, that excellent Figaro insisted on lending him a blouse by way of *ægis*. In that guise he passed easily for a Republican, but he saw enough in two days to cure him of Paris forever.

The *Garde Municipale*, loyal to the core, fought like heroes to stem the tide of revolution—to no purpose. Against them *en revanche* the whole storm of popular fury burst. At first it appeared as though order would be restored, but the barricades rose as by magic. A cab or wagon was upset across the road. Then the paving stones were ripped up by a thousand hands, the neighboring houses looted of their furniture, and, *presto*, the mounds they formed were guarded by blouse-clad *ouvriers*, some with firearms, others with swords and crowbars. Against them the *Garde* charged with varying fortune. If they

broke through, the mob dispersed right and left, only, however, to reassemble as soon as the chance offered. The friendly barber shouldered a musket and fired with the rest on the *Garde*, till at last victory declared for the mob; and then commenced those scenes of barbarity which caused the blood of the English gentleman witnessing them to run cold. They, the mob, broke the *Garde*, and took them in detail, the worst fate being reserved for those who surrendered. Three of these brave citizen soldiers were burned alive. Charles Reade saw them pile the pyre around them and light it, the while they danced and yelled the *carmagnole*. For the mob was drunk not merely with blood, but with ardent spirits and wine, the women being even more brutal than the men. A fourth member of the *Garde* was dragged in front of the barricade to suffer the same fate, when, fortunately for him, a citizen recognized his face as that of a friend, tore the blouse from off his own back, rushed madly forward, and flung it over the head and shoulders of the doomed man, crying aloud, as the terror-stricken *garde* suffered himself to be thus elad, that he was now a citizen. Incredible as it may read, it is none the less true—*teste* Charles Reade—that this mad, murderous mob burst into tears, and fell to kissing the *garde* whom but for this meaningless incident they would have ruthlessly murdered. He was verily plucked as a brand from the burning.

A little of this experience went a long way with an adventurer not wholly destitute of common-sense. At that crisis a Red Republic was a possibility; a government wielding an executive a bare probability. Under such conditions Paris became metamorphosed into a paradise of terror, and it needed but the whisper of a chattering or malicious tongue to doom to death the young Briton in

the blouse, for that pallium, though for a citizen little short of miraculous, on the back of an alien, and that alien a child of perfidious Albion, would have been regarded as a paltry fraud. To escape was the problem. The friendly barber laughed at the nervousness of citizen Charles, and possibly was loath to lose his lodger; when, however, a mob raving with blood and brandy took to incendiarism *pour s'amuser*, Monsieur Figaro admitted reluctantly that things had got to be a little unsettled, and agreed to facilitate his lodger's exit. A cab was prevailed on to stop opposite the door in the dead of night. Into it Charles Reade was bundled, and at once crouched beneath a truss of straw. The driver's orders were to crawl as though he were returning with his straw to his stables, in order to avoid suspicion. This programme was carried through to the letter, and after a series of hair-breadth escapes Charles Reade astonished and delighted his relatives by producing a whole skin, though one unshaven and unkempt. He left behind him a score of valuable fiddles and some pictures, together with an extensive wardrobe, a portion whereof only he was enabled to recover.

In this year, 1848, he spent a longer time than was his wont at Ipsden. His father had almost lost his sight, and, deprived of the field sports which had been his employment through life, rapidly developed acute depression of spirits. The picturesque old gentleman with hair white as the riven snow, and features statuesque in their chiselling, used to roam his grounds all day leaning on the arm of his valet, the tears coursing down his cheeks.

He fancied he was ruined.

Oddly enough, ten miles only from Ipsden at that very moment, a millionaire, who had travelled up to London in a wagon without so much as the typical shilling, and

amassed a fortune in comparison with which the rent-roll of Ipsden was a pittance, had to be humored by the dole of a pauper. They gave him his out-door relief every Saturday, and he took it in blissful ignorance that he was the owner of some three millions of money.

The poor old Squire of Ipsden's illusion never reached to that extent, but he was none the less persuaded that ruin had overtaken him, and his son Charles was requisitioned to try every expedient in order to ward off the pitiable tears and moans.

In his youth the Squire had been fond of whist. The strict *régime* of Messieurs Faber and Fry voted all sorts of games of chance anathema, and for some fifty odd years a card had not been visible in Ipsden House. The medical men, however, prescribed amusement as the sole palliative, and with great reluctance Mrs. Reade assented to son Charles producing a pack of the devil's pictures. His motive was filial and humane, but the devoted son must have wished ere long that he had hearkened to the voice of his mother. It soon came to this: either the Squire must be kept going at whist from breakfast to luncheon, from luncheon to dinner, and so on till bed-time, or else he would give way to low spirits, and that to an alarming extent. Charles Reade in his latter days became as great a devotee of whist as his sire, but this arrangement amounted to servitude. Friends of the family were invited to visit Ipsden simply to take a hand at the everlasting whist-table.*

* On one occasion the eldest surviving son, who, though sobered by age, still enjoyed a practical joke, created by a simple trick the most profound amazement in the minds of the three other persons, his mother, father, and sister, who with himself were sitting at the whist-table. Making some excuse that the cards were mislaid, he went in search of them, and, having

Whatever difference may have temporarily separated father and son in the past, there can be no doubt but that at this crisis Charles Reade played a dutiful, and indeed devoted, part. Moreover, it so happened that his sister Ellinor at the moment was exerting all her influence to build a new church at Stoke Row, a lonely hamlet in the centre of the beech-woods on the summit of the Chilterns, a portion whereof belonged to her father, who gave the site for church and parsonage. Mrs. Reade felt it incumbent upon her to dose the bodies of the poor on her husband's estate, while her daughter exercised a similar care for their souls, and the project of a church for heathen Stoke Row fired her enthusiasm. The era of excessive church-building had not yet set in, so that what with Oxford and Cambridge, the Church and the world, her task was not quite superhuman. It necessitated, nevertheless, a mountain of hard work; and certain it is, that if Charles Reade had as yet cherished any dream of authorship it would have been placed in abeyance. He was, however, then leading a homely and domestic existence, the general utility man of the family circle, whist-player, begging-letter writer, and game provider, not to mention companion

found them, Mr. Reade being the dealer, volunteered to deal for him. Hearts were trumps. Each player took up his hand, when a loud exclamation was heard from Mr. Reade. "Good gracious," he said, "I have got all trumps." "And I," excitedly cried his wife, "have all spades." "And I," shouted William, "have nothing but clubs." "And here are all the diamonds," said Ellinor. Not for a moment was a trick suspected. The miracle, as it appeared to the players, created the most profound surprise, not to say a feeling with three of the number of uneasiness; the fourth remained stolidly staring at the cards, which by common consent were put away for that afternoon. The amazement was too profound to permit of the game being played, nor did the culprit ever confess. Long afterwards the wonderful occurrence formed the topic of conversation.

to his nephews during their holidays, and to their sisters at other times.

At last the ecclesiastical business was settled, and he shall tell the story himself in his letter to brother Edward at Benares:

“DEAR EDWARD,—I have long promised myself the pleasure of relating to you the events of which our house and neighborhood have lately been the scene—events interesting to all right-thinking persons, but to none more than yourself, who are acquainted with the natural beauties of our wood-girdled hamlets, and the moral degradation which, alas! has hitherto disfigured them.

“You are aware what difficulties have been encountered. First, a considerable sum was to be raised for the building of a church; and this, through the kindness and zeal of Christian friends, was our least impediment.

“Next, the endowment was to be obtained partly from the College of St. John’s, Cambridge, holding the great tithes of the parish, and partly from surplus subscriptions, aided by a liberal provision, for which our excellent vicar, the Rev. R. Twopeny, is to be thanked; and I am sorry to say we encountered in the college a wearisome obstacle.

“All this arranged, our Bishop declined to consecrate the new church until a curate should be found ready at once to undertake its service.

“I fear we did not at first appreciate our diocesan’s wisdom in making this stipulation; but now we humbly confess our error.

“This last hinderance was not so easily removed as we hoped, as you yourself might have anticipated.

“The secluded situation of Stoke Row—the circumstance of there being no house for the clergyman—and no water fit for use within a distance of several miles.

“These disadvantages, added to the smallness of the stipend, no doubt deterred many of those whose zeal languishes without the allurements of what is called society, and is incapable of dispensing with earthly luxuries.

“At last, however, one was found willing to labor in this new vineyard, upon such terms as it offered, a gentleman and scholar, indifferent to society of rich or poor, and content to divide his time between the doctors of the Church and its services. His name is Cole.

"This was duly notified to the Bishop of Oxford, and after some few changes the consecration was finally fixed for Tuesday, the 19th October, 1848.

"As the Bishop, the Archdeacons of Berks and Oxford, and other personages were to be entertained and sleep, on Monday, at Ipsden, considerable preparation, you may suppose, was necessary. My gun was put in requisition, nor was Covent Garden neglected. My father alone remained discontented with our efforts, on the ground of a falling off in our butter, which used to be excellent, nor could he be brought to believe that a Bishop could put up with butter so inferior to what he, by his position, must be accustomed to.

"The solicitude after all was superfluous. The Bishop does not eat butter.

"Our guests were all assembled on the Monday evening, when the Bishop arrived in exact time. He made a hasty toilet, and immediately reappeared.

"He had not brushed his hair. We understand it is not his custom.

"We were at opposite ends of the dinner-table—the Bishop and I. It was my fate to lead out Lady Catherine Berens. At the Bishop's end of the table the conversation was as lively as it was dull where I was.

"Dr. Wilberforce's high and earnest tone in the pulpit, and his deep fervor, whenever a religious subject, always welcome, is started, would hardly prepare a common observer for his ordinary conversation, the characteristic of which is decidedly humorous. I wish my situation had permitted me to bring away some of those sprightly sallies with which he entertained the ladies at his end of the table.

"Tuesday, a quarter-past eleven A.M., our cavalcade started for the new church. The Bishop, some time after the rest, led by me and Mr. Pearson in my pony gig, arrived on Stoke Row Common. We saw a very pretty sight, all the country people collected in their gayest colors round the edifice. The church, which is small, was entirely filled with visitors, after which a form was introduced, capable of accommodating a dozen more of the inhabitants. They, however, preferred watching the vehicles outside.

"The musical part of the service was provided by Mr. Benfield, of Reading, his daughters, and dependants, and was done in a pure and simple style. The Bishop preached an excellent discourse. I wish I could give you some idea of his eloquence and impressive delivery of sacred truths, uttered in their full breadth without any mincing of the matter.

My perverse memory contains rhetorical flowers, when the root was better bringing away.

"He illustrated the difference between professing and true Christians in the difference between dead things and living.

"‘These people,’ said he, ‘go through religious appearances from custom, because it is the fashion, because respectable people in their line of life all do it—dead things go with the stream, but living things go by a course of their own, now with, now against, the stream.’ Then he compared the former characters to stones, on whom, perhaps, the gospel sun shines for a while, the warmth dies away, and they are colder than the very ground which surrounds them. How unlike those living things, the fruits and flowers, which absorb these beams, and give them back in beauty and perfume!

"Then he depicted a certain empty religion, of which, after describing its pretensions, he pronounced ‘it shrinks at singularity, faints under a laugh, and dies under the Cross.’

"In short, to make a singular observation, the sermon ended too soon.

"On the termination of the service, I went to make sure the musicians were being taken care of. I found them very hungry, sitting round a table, gazing on vacancy. I left them with the cheerless horizon broken by a fillet of veal, a gigantic ham, and a cake, on which the table might have been set, instead of it on the table. These provisions were kept in abeyance for the clergy, on whose charity I knew I could presume.

"I need not describe our return; it was conducted in the same order we came.

"The Bishop dined with Mr. Twopeny at the vicarage, returning thence to our house to sleep. Unfortunately, his coachman, to save himself trouble, prevailed on ours (James Hutt) to go for his lordship to the vicarage. When the carriage was announced, the Bishop was engaged in interesting conversation, and did not move. So after a few minutes, Mr. Twopeny's dolt of a man-servant came again to him.

"Dolt.—‘Mr. Reade's horses are waiting, sir.’

"Bishop.—‘I think you must be mistaken, doubtless my horses are waiting.’

"Dolt.—‘No! no! I tell’ee, it's Mr. Reade's carriage and horses as be waiting.’

"So the prelate was actually bundled off, against his will, and, having arrived, told us the tale in his dramatic way.

"Of course we were shocked that he should have thought of deferring so much to our horses.

"Whereupon he reminded my mother that he had been admonished twenty years ago, when curate of Checkenden, that he was not to keep the Ipsden horses waiting!

"Thus the grave events of the period were diversified by incidents of a lighter character."

This letter, it must be remembered, was addressed to a brother on whom he had not set eyes for twenty years. Mr. Edward A. Reade at that time was Commissioner of Benares, and one of the warmest supporters of Evangelical Missions in the province of Bengal. From Benares he was transferred afterwards to Agra, where, as a senior member of the Sudder Board, and acting Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces during the Mutiny, he rendered such signal service to India and its European denizens as to have honestly merited promotion. Instead, he was passed over in favor of his junior, who had been out of harm's way at Calcutta. This job on the part of Lord Canning was apologized for on the plea that Mr. Edward A. Reade, though the warm friend of both the Lawrences, and held in the highest estimation by the native princes, whose loyalty his personal influence secured, was nicknamed "Primitive" on account of incapacity. There never was a grosser slander. He was dubbed "Primitive" because of his supposed affinity with Methodism, albeit really he was an attached Anglican of the Low-Church type. In addressing a brother whose belief was so pronounced as to have afterwards virtually robbed him of the reward earned by unostentatious heroism, Charles Reade adopted, let us say diplomatically, a tone calculated to win his sympathy. When, in later life, he reverted to the views which colored his boyhood, if

not his young manhood, his pen often flowed much in the same strain; and the theatrical acquaintance who accused him of religious melancholia would be surprised possibly to perceive the similarity between his style of 1848 and that of 1881. In the former year, at all events, he was free from melancholia, yet he writes as one in harmony with Christianity. It is surely not necessary for a man to be a lunatic in order to be a believer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the assumption that Charles Reade lost his head when he regained his conscience is one which, on the ground of its impudence alone, arouses our just indignation.

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. SEYMOUR.

WE are now approaching the period when Charles Reade first essayed authorship. He had been a great, because a wide, reader, and the habit of assimilation and rapid, though close, observation was destined to stand him in good stead. Like almost every author who has attained celebrity, he began by sowing a large crop of literary wild oats. He believed himself to be a dramatist born, and at the outset his thoughts focussed themselves entirely on the stage. It seldom seems to have occurred to him to essay fiction, albeit he conceived himself capable of excelling in criticism should he ever attempt to exercise that dormant faculty. There was at the time little to encourage the playwright. There were, comparatively speaking, but few play-houses, and those few in the hands of a small clique. A good novel commanded a high price, whereas a successful play yielded but a slender return to the author who could not afford to back his own venture. Charles Reade, however, thirsted not so much for gold as for fame. True, his essentially unpractical nature and rather expensive tastes had already dipped into his Fellowship, and money was really a superior consideration to one whose reversionary interest at that time was not expected to exceed two thousand pounds, for he had received from his father already nearly half a younger son's portion.

No man, however, suffered less from the *auri sacra fames*; none was less mercenary. His ambition was pure. Give him fame. Let the dullards of the common room and the heavy respectabilities of Ipsden learn that he could, by an effort, rise far above their level. Let the mighty world of two hemispheres own him as one of its true aristocracy. That was the man's aim, and he directed all his efforts towards it. He wrote play after play with the pen of the amateur, yet each one rising above its predecessor, and none devoid of some scintillæ of brilliance. Three years he toiled along the weary road of failure, still cherishing a belief in himself, still preserving a heart of grace, yet encountering disappointments such as would have crushed a weaker nature. Worse still, as his MSS. proved sterile, in like proportion his creditors grew importunate. Oftentimes he was harried across the Channel to await the Bursar's check which should enable him to return home; yet oftener he buried himself in dingy courts and alleys to escape the attentions of Mr. Sloman.

At the close of 1849 his fine old sire paid the debt of nature. His eldest surviving son, the new Squire, pressed his mother still to occupy the old home where she had been mistress for fifty-five years, and she remained at Ipsden House until 1852. During these years Charles was a constant visitor at Ipsden, and, when he confided to a fond mother his pecuniary difficulties, that generous-hearted woman at once permitted him to anticipate the sum he would have to receive under her marriage settlement at her death. He rewarded, it may be added, her confidence by regularly paying interest.

This, however, served but as a stop-gap. His Fellowship of Magdalen yielded little more than £250 net per annum, and the Vinerian Fellowship about £80. He had

every incentive to labor, and as months rolled on his toil redoubled, so much so that, under the strain of mental work and disquiet, his health gave way, not indeed seriously, for he was naturally robust and muscular, yet sufficiently to augment the difficulties of his position. It was the managers of theatres, who could not be persuaded to accept his maiden dramas, that in the main caused the mischief. Stupid people can persevere without belief in themselves; genius never loses faith in itself till after repeated rebuffs, but when first it begins to suspect that its confidence may be misplaced it succumbs, not under disillusion, but rather under a keen sense of injustice. These years of waiting for the dawn of hope aged and soured one who had retained the freshness and sweetness of boyhood into middle life. He complained bitterly of the absence of sympathy; for which he yearned as the parched land for the summer's rain.

He found it, at last, perhaps where least he could have expected it.

At the Haymarket Theatre there was playing, under the auspices of Mr. Buckstone, a distinguished comedian, Mrs. Seymour. She was magnanimous and appreciative, and, like many women of her calibre, could recognize the difference between a real and a sham gentleman. Ladies whom the voice of scandal never sullied have been less warm-hearted and charitable than one whom the world knocked about, and who none the less gave back some positive good for the evil she received. Had her father never drifted to London from Somersetshire she would have made a superlative farmer's wife and market-woman. As it was, she passed through the dark furnace of London life, and emerged from it a brave and benevolent woman.

Mrs. Seymour never was an actress of the very highest

rank. She had brains; she was brimful of the dramatic instinct, and played up to a certain level. She met Charles Reade when she was at her zenith. She was taking the lead at the Haymarket, was well-looking off the stage, and could make up pretty, though her figure had become matronly. She was in receipt of a good weekly salary; she knew every one who was any one in the land of Bohemia, and, in short, her influence far transcended that of many an eminent author, and of not a few lessees and managers.

It chanced one night that Charles Reade saw this lady play. Even in his earlier years he always had a slight tendency to deafness, and Mrs. Seymour's ringing tones saved him the trouble of listening with an effort. At once he mentally appraised her as a great actress, a verdict not universally endorsed, though undoubtedly she rose in suitable parts above mediocrity.

Besides her voice, he admired her *vif* manner, acquaintance with the stage, and physique. Tastes happily differ, and if everybody failed to share his unbounded admiration of the actress, he was by no means her sole admirer. It may, however, be safely predicted that he stood alone in believing her to be a really great artist. Yet it was to her as such that he went back to his chambers and addressed a letter.

In this epistle he was direct rather than effusive. Hinting broadly his appreciation, he nevertheless kept close to the point, which was personal. He wished her to give him an interview, in order to read a passage from a play he had commenced. The response was in the affirmative. Mrs. Seymour would see Mr. Charles Reade.

He called accordingly, hat in hand. He had been snubbed all along the line by people of her craft, including Buck-

stone, Webster, and the rest of the theatrical set. It was with diffidence that he approached her, perhaps with a tinge of melancholy.

He read her a scene from an unfinished drama. She listened as middle-aged women do who have been bored perpetually by authors; not exactly with interest, yet not altogether frigidly.

"Yes," she cried, when he concluded, "that's good! That's plotting. But," with a merry stage-laugh, which had become natural to her, "why don't you write novels?"

If she had uttered a coarse malediction Charles Reade could have borne it stoically. This suggestion that he had better try another line cut him to the quick.

"I am trespassing on your time," he said, rising hastily.

"Oh, no. Pray go on."

But he had heard enough. Politely, and without any show of the offence he felt, he bowed himself out.

Whatever else she had learned, or omitted to learn, Mrs. Seymour, at all events, knew the male sex by heart. A glance at the pale face of the tall man, who barely touched the tip of her fingers as he left the room, told her that he was disappointed. She was essentially good-natured. She felt sorry. Besides, he was a fine man, with the *bel* air of one accustomed to society.

"Hard up, I suppose," she muttered, "like the rest of them. Wanted me to buy his play for an old song, no doubt—but of course that's absurd. Still, I don't like to see a fellow of his sort down on his luck, and I'll tell him as much."

She was no more in love with Charles Reade than he with her; perhaps it is no libel upon her to affirm that she was quite beyond falling in love with any man. She could

feel as a friend for man or woman, not as a lover; indeed, to place her idiosyncrasies in their true light, we may anticipate the course of events so far as to state that, some twenty years later, she said, "I hope Mr. Reade will never ask me to marry him, as I should certainly refuse." This after they had been friends and theatrical partners for so long.

To revert to our narrative. This kind-hearted woman, whose conscience accused her of meanness, sat down and indited a downright blundering but most considerate letter. She began by expressing her regret that a gentleman of his obvious birth and breeding should be out of spirits on the score of money; adding that while, as a matter of business, she could not make him an offer for his play, she begged he would accept the loan of five pounds (bank-note enclosed). A lady of her sort would not unnaturally connect sad looks with empty pockets, and never for a second suspect that it was baffled ambition which blanched Charles Reade's cheek rather than the want of bank-notes. She was soon to be disillusioned.

Her letter affected its recipient profoundly. He knew how thoroughly she had misread him, but readily pardoned the error in consideration of the sympathy her act evidenced so demonstratively. This time he would not wait for an appointment, but called with her bank-note in his hand.

"No," said he, his words expressing an emotion he very rarely betrayed, "that is not what I need. But you have unintentionally supplied it."

What passed at that interview is not known. Each had learned in a moment to respect the other, and we may be sure that a friendship thus commenced was from the outset regarded as sacred. It had, moreover, to develop.

They were as yet strangers; and if Mrs. Seymour found for the first time a man of genius who cared neither for money nor love, but coveted fame and friendship, celebrity and sympathy, Charles Reade was equally charmed by at last discovering a woman who could understand his motives and ambitions, and was ready to give him what he sorely needed, the first step on the ladder.

It must, moreover, be categorically asserted, on the individual authority of the late Mr. Winwood Reade, who was a constant inmate subsequently of their house in Bolton Row, that the friendship between these two was Platonic. Mr. Winwood Reade was an avowed atheist, the bitterest enemy of Christianity of his age, a man who, on philosophic grounds, despised morality. He would have treated a *liaison* between his uncle and Mrs. Seymour, not merely as a matter of course, but as derogatory to neither. Yet it is a fact that he went out of his way to assure some of those who were most deeply interested in his uncle of his positive conviction that their relations were those of friends only. And although Mr. Winwood Reade's views were otherwise devoid of principle or belief, he was truthful invariably, and on matters of fact worthy of credit.

It is all the more needful *in limine* to insist on this, because if Charles Reade's partnership with a practical woman of the world was of the nature of a morganatic marriage, their lives were a brazen fraud. For there was no concealment, no dove-cote, in St. John's Wood, or other expedient to avoid the gaze of the world; on the contrary, the author introduced the actress to his family as the lady who kept house for him. He took her to Oxford, and invited his college to meet her on the same footing. He would have punished the man who dared insinuate that Mrs. Seymour was his mistress. Nay more, she was per-

fectly free to wed whom she would after the death of her husband; and he equally free, after that he had amassed fortune sufficient to have enabled him to dispense with his Fellowship. Neither did marry. The link remained unbroken to the end. "*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*"

From a literary point of view Mrs. Seymour's five-pound note proved the nucleus of fortune and of fame. It converted her into his fast friend, and her wit, never at a loss for an expedient, assisted him at every turn. She was the architect of his fortune, if not of his reputation.

Just previous to his first acquaintance with this lady he had formed a sort of literary combination with the late Mr. Tom Taylor, a Cambridge man, and a successful playwright. The Reade and Taylor alliance commenced with "A Ladies' Battle"—a singularly awkward translation of a singularly pat title. The play, however, as adapted for the British public by these authors, achieved something more than a *succes d'estime*, being on the lines of drawing-room comedy, an art as yet uninvented.

An industrious, on the average, yet occasionally desultory writer, an unpractical and unmethodical man in his private habits, Charles Reade began diaries, to break them off abruptly, and leave a hiatus of years. Fortunately, at this intermediate stage of his career, when he was collaborating as an obscurity with a celebrity, he jotted down a record of his sensations. It is fragmentary, spasmodic, and careless, but, notwithstanding, affords a fair index of his mental state. We append the following extracts :

"IPSDEN HOUSE, WALLINGFORD, May 7, 1852.

"I am so ill in mind and body that I have resolved to go to Malvern.

"*Bellevue Hotel, Malvern.*—What is more horrible than being alone in a strange place at an inn, and it raining ?

"Then the doctors are like Eastern princes. Dr. Gully, I am told, receives no visits after noon. So I am to take mine ease in mine inn till to-morrow.

"May 18.—On the lookout for characters. There is in Dr. Gully's establishment a gentleman, a very wealthy man, who leaves home and immures himself *chez* Gully, and deserts all family connections. Why? He says because he eats too much pudding at home, and makes himself ill. So far so good. But here comes an inconsistency. He eats too much pudding *chez* Gully, and makes himself ill in this temple of health. Now if a man's bowels *are* to go wrong, why not in the bosom of his family? I wish somebody would explain this to me. He worries me. I don't see it, and I loathe the unintelligible. But is this a character? or *tout bonnement un âne*?

"June 7, Malvern.—I have now been a month in this place, and were I to call it a month stolen from my life, it would not be far from the truth.

"It has been a month of *ennui* and utter collapse of bodily and mental power. Mine is a nature that requires some *little* amusement, and also the sound of some little human sentiment. Deprived of these for so many dreary days, solitary and cheerless, my mind is collapsing, and will go unless I save myself by flight.

"I came here to work! What have I done. I have written in these thirty days ten pages of a novel; I have lost health, time, and digestion. But it serves me right! I knew beforehand I could not write a novel in a dungeon. I shall certainly run off one of these days. To Paris? Anywhere, and wash the taste of this Dead Sea out of my soul.

"Such is the result of a month filched from my short life in this wretched place.

“June 17.—Forty days, constant wind, so that I have not been able to sit one half-hour in the air. No acquaintance with a grain of feeling or brains, and I cannot stand dolts or fleshy statues.

“Took what they call a lamp-bath the other day. I was to perspire. No such thing. Fainted instead. More refined, but less agreeable.

“June 24.—How hard it is to find a horse that it is a *pleasure* to ride, as rare as a play that does not yawn you, or a woman that does not deceive you. For all that, I have found a black mare whose paces are delicious. Like all watering-place hacks, she is safer galloping down hill than walking.

“Read Vol. I. of ‘Pendennis’—an imitation of Fielding.

“I hear —— is thinking of taking the Olympic Theatre. If he does he will keep it from becoming a dead letter to us authors, and consequently to the public, who find novelty at every other place that professes to unyawn them. Here they have got nothing hitherto but raw meat and cold cabbage.

“How ludicrous is the *amour-propre* of English actors. And their notion that no author knows the meaning of his own words! A play of mine loses so enormously when not rehearsed by me that I fear I shall always torment them for the sake of my own credit. What a difference there was in the ‘Ladies’ Battle’ brought out at a second-rate theatre under my rehearsal and at a first-rate theatre under Leigh Murray’s. I have long ago made up my mind to give actors and actresses my views in private, and interrupt as little as may be upon the stage at rehearsal.

“Actors, however—that is to say, English actors—for French actors esteem every word an author says about his

own work a favor—are a little unjust, a little obscure in their judgment on this point. I, for instance, do not teach them acting or speaking. I don't teach my actors to speak Shakespeare or Mark Lemon, I simply teach them how to give my meaning to my words, and every competent dramatic author, however small a one, can do this. He cannot speak beautifully, as actors ought, but he can give the exact point of every sentence in his work, and the actor's business is to tune those words, and point, and tone, and dilate, and beautify them. This is done by Mrs. Stirling in the long soliloquy, 'Ladies' Battle,' and was done all through the play.

"Among the numerous fallacies of the stage is this. That if A learns something from B, in that case B can't learn anything from A. Nonsense. No actor ever plays a part without my learning from him. Why? Because I am not an ass. And no *great* actor ever hears me read my work without learning something from me. Why? Because great actors are not asses.

"The great always learn more from the little than the little from the great."

This last paragraph breathes the spirit and temper which subsequently found vent in "The Eighth Commandment." His heart always turned towards the stage. It was more than a hobby, a consuming passion, and the unsympathetic atmosphere of Malvern caused him to revert entirely to London and his work in the world.

The next entry in his diary has a special value of its own. It is stated—albeit we have not been able to verify the allegation—that in America "Masks and Faces" is invariably announced as by Tom Taylor. As originally produced in England it was by Tom Taylor and Charles

Reade, and the former gained the lion's share of the credit. In its latest revival under Mrs. Bancroft, we have it, on the authority of Charles Reade himself, that "oddly enough"—his *verba verberima*—"not one single line of Tom Taylor survived;" every line was Charles Reade's.

Bearing in mind that this was the first creation of his prolific genius, and one worthy to rank side by side with the dramas of Goldsmith and Sheridan, being, in fact, an *English classic* of the highest merit, it is all-important that its authorship should be defined. The following indicates approximately the exact share Tom Taylor had in the play as originally produced. Even that share was whittled down, while in the long run, if Charles Reade be a witness of truth, it was eliminated altogether. However, this tells the tale :

"June 7. — Dramatic annoyances have found me out even here. My *collaborateur*, Taylor, has written a new *dénouement*, and without submitting it to me has read it to the Haymarket Company. This has hurt my *amour propre*, and a nobler feeling of creative paternity. The end of a play is all-important, and I feel that Woffington, who is entirely mine, ought at least to have been subject to my brush down to the last. What is the history of this play? I wrote a certain scene in which Triplet, whose broad outlines I then and there drew, figured ; and another personation scene containing Peg Woffington, Colley Cibber, James Quin. I showed these to Taylor as scenes. He liked these two characters, and we agreed to write a comedy.

"I began. I wrote the greater part of Act I., and sketched situations of second act, *viz.*, the company assembled in Mr. Vane's house, and Mrs. Vane's sudden ap-

pearance, Mrs. Vane's kindness to Triplet—a mere sketch ; and in Triplet's house the first picture scene almost as it stands now ; and I wrote a little of a third act. Well, Taylor came down to me, added to my first act, filled up the chinks, got Vane into a better position, and made the first act an act.

“I think it lay idle six months. He then went to work and treated the rest in the same way. So that at this period he was author of two thirds of the play, so far as sentences went. He was satisfied with it, and read it to Mrs. Stirling, who turned her back on him and said plump, ‘It won't do.’ Full stop for a month or two. Then he wrote to me, and I took the bull by the horns. Flung Act I. into the fire and wrote a new act, dashing at once into the main story. I took his cold stage creation, Pomander, and put alcohol into him, and, on the plan of the great French dramatists, I made the plot work by a constant close battle between a man and a woman. I then took in hand Act II., and slashed through Taylor's verbosity, losing none of his beauties, and he has some pretty things in that act. Then I came to Act III., where I found my own picture-scene wanted little alteration. Then, with the help of a speech or two of Mabel's as sweet as honey (Taylor's), I softened Woffington so that she cried in the frame, and Mabel found her out.

“Then I offered the MS. to Taylor. He did not like the fence-and-rail prepared for him, and he said, ‘You reconcile the two women, and I'll go on.’ Well, I did so, and I was not sorry to stop, for I was working in a high key, and did not see my way to sustain it through a mist of stagy manœuvres that I saw ahead. However, while at Paris I did actually finish the play on thin paper, and sent it to my *collaborateur*.

“Taylor did not like my *dénouement*. He altered it, and read his to Webster, who did not like it. He has altered it again, and so the matter stands.*

* The following communication from Mr. Arnold Taylor of the Local Government Board throws additional light on the genesis of “Masks and Faces :”

“Charles Reade and Tom Taylor first became acquainted in the winter of 1850–51, or spring of 1851. ’Twas on this wise: Mrs. Stirling had put into Tom Taylor’s hands Reade’s play of ‘Christie Johnstone,’ and told the former who and what the author of the play was. My brother brought the play home with him to the Temple, where I lived with him and the late Cuthbert Ellison, from August, 1850, to August, 1851. Hence my ability to fix the dates above given. Ellison and I were going to bed, when my brother came in and said, ‘Stop; I want to read you a play by an Oxford man, one Charles Reade, about whom Mrs. Stirling has been talking to me.’

“We listened to the play with great interest, and my brother warmly praised certain parts of it, adding, however, ‘It is utterly unsuited for the stage, and so I shall tell Mrs. Stirling when I return her the MS.’

“The verdict was a sad disappointment to Charles Reade, but he accepted it, and subsequently published the story as a one-volume novel, in which the original dramatic form is visible throughout.

“The above incident led to the subsequent intimacy of Reade and Taylor, the introduction being made through Mrs. Stirling. We saw him from time to time at our chambers, 3 Fig-Tree Court, Temple, and his great desire then was to write a play in collaboration with my brother.

“In 1851 or 1852 he had the idea of a play founded on Peg Woffington, and I have the authority of my brother’s assertion, often repeated in my own hearing, and that of others, who can corroborate me, that when Charles Reade came to him on the subject, he had one character, and a bit of one scene, together with some vague, crude ideas how the play was to be worked into shape.

“In August, 1851, my mother, brother, and others of my family went to live at Chiswick, and it was there that the play of ‘Masks and Faces’ was written, not entirely, but mainly in the form in which it was first acted.

“It was first played at the Haymarket in November, 1852. I conclude, therefore, that the play must have been written at Chiswick, in the summer or autumn of that year.

“June 10.—I have consented to let ‘Masks and Faces’ be brought out altered to please Webster, who is not so good a writer as an actor.

“Anyway, Charles Reade was our guest at Chiswick Lodge, and the method of writing the play was this, that during the day (my brother being in town at his office) Charles Reade wrote long passages, which were as ruthlessly cut to pieces or rejected at night by my brother, when they sat down together to put together and complete their work. And morning after morning, as I well remember, when we were at breakfast, Charles Reade used, half in sorrow, half in fun, to say to my mother, ‘There, Mrs. Taylor, my gentleman has been at his old game. He has cut out every line of that dialogue, and all those sentiments you so much admired when I read them to you yesterday afternoon.’

“In this way the writing of the play went on till its completion in three acts. Among my brother’s MSS. I have found a fair copy, made by myself for the authors, of *an* act No. 1. In this fair copy, corrected subsequently in my brother’s handwriting, as the MS. shows, there is a great deal wholly omitted from the play as acted, but a great deal which was subsequently introduced by Charles Reade into his one-volume novel of ‘Peg Woffington.’

“Then followed further alterations. Very much to Charles Reade’s vexation, and contrary to all his ideas and wishes, the play was cut down by my brother to two acts, and worked by him into the shape in which it was finally acted at the Haymarket.

“I have abundant proofs in letters of Charles Reade, written to my brother in 1852, how much this change went against the grain with him. He even objects to certain minor characters, and the names they bear. Further, these letters contain repeated evidence that Charles Reade then fully recognized the difference between himself, an unknown author, and a successful dramatist like my brother.

“The latter, however, was never slow to do the fullest justice to a fellow-workman. And, often as I have heard him mention the one character and part of one scene already alluded to, I always heard him add, ‘But the beginning of the second act, the scene in the garret between Peg Woffington and Triplet and his family—the best, I think, in the whole play—was entirely Charles Reade’s.’

“‘Masks and Faces’ proving a great success, Charles Reade then, with-

"Taylor has been talking to me of the labor of collaboration. I told him labor is the condition of all excellence. Results, not processes, are to be regarded. I only

out so much as naming his intention to my brother, produced the one-volume novel of 'Peg Woffington.'

"This naturally set people asking whether the play of 'Masks and Faces' or the novel of 'Peg Woffington' was written first? If the latter, all the credit of originality rested with Charles Reade, and Tom Taylor had merely been asked to use his experience as a playwright, and throw the story into dramatic form.

"My brother having remonstrated with Charles Reade on the line he had taken, the latter then prefixed to the novel the dedication, dated December 15th, 1852: 'To Tom Taylor, my friend and coadjutor in the comedy of "Masks and Faces," to whom the reader owes much of the best matter of this tale.'

"I find the same dedication repeated in a new edition of 'Peg Woffington,' published in 1857.

"I thought, and still think, and said so at the time to my brother, that the language of the dedication was not adequate to the circumstances and the facts.

"His answer, as far as I can recall it, was, 'Reade's a queer fellow, with odd notions about the rights and wrongs of things, and I'm quite willing to let the whole thing pass and be forgotten.'

"But the matter left, I think, a soreness on both sides, for it was not until April, 1854, that their second play, 'Two Loves and a Life,' was produced at the Adelphi, and their third, 'The King's Rival,' at the St. James, in October of the same year.

"Shortly after the production of 'Masks and Faces,' Charles Reade produced a play, all his own, 'Gold,' which I well remember seeing at Drury Lane.

"It is only necessary to recall that immature production to be convinced that the hand that wrote it was incapable of the terse, sparkling, and polished finish of 'Masks and Faces.'

"The play, as first produced, was, as every one knows, an immense success. It may therefore be inferred that the cutting down the three acts to two, the changes in the scenes and incidents, the cutting out of some and the insertion of other minor characters, all done by Tom Taylor,

wish I could reduce collaboration to a science, that is all.

"I could write twelve halves of three-act plays in a year, writing only between breakfast and luncheon; but I could not write six plays without hurting my brain.

"July 15, Durham.—Made acquaintance here with a charming, clever woman, beautiful as the dawn, and madly in love with a man hideous as midnight, and not one idea in his skull. There are such women, full of talent, yet next door to idiots. Miss Chaworth utterly despised Lord Byron, and venerated a brainless boor, a snob, a beast, who leathered her with his riding-whip.

"It was not that she liked Jack, and admired George but objected to his person. She respected the Beast and despised the Man.

"July 20.—I have written three copy-books of 'Peg Woffington,' a novel. I hope to make a decent three-volume novel of it; but whether any one will publish it is another question. If not now, perhaps in three years' time. Literature no doubt is a close borough.

against Charles Reade's wish or consent, as his own letters show, had much to do with the success of the play during its run at the Haymarket in 1852, and subsequently at the Adelphi.

"I therefore sum up my narrative of what is within my own knowledge by saying that I believe Mrs. Seymour had no acquaintance with Charles Reade when 'Masks and Faces' was written by him and Tom Taylor.

"That the idea of making Peg Woffington the heroine of a play was exclusively Charles Reade's; that the shaping of the play into the form in which it was finally produced was Tom Taylor's. But that the credit of the play should be equally divided between the two authors, as each brought to the work qualities and powers peculiarly his own, the ultimate result being the production of certainly one of the very best and finished comedies of modern times.

ARNOLD TAYLOR.

"SURBITON HILL, Oct. 11, 1886."

"I am in love with Peg Woffington. She is dead, and can't sting me. I love her, and I hope to make many love her.

"August 3, Durham.—My life is very monotonous. Nothing but old people here now. No sympathy with my pursuits. I am a most unhappy artist, to have no public and no domestic circle. Praise and sympathy are the breath of our nostrils. It is not all vanity. More than other people we are here for the sake of others, and it is crushing when no one cares for what we do. My friends have good understandings and are great readers, yet no one of them has ever expressed the least curiosity as to what I write. Yet they have the impudence to bring me trash to read in MS., in which a stiff, barren, conventional set of incidents are flung like blots upon paper, and garnished round with texts of Scripture and endless reflections.

"Wait till I get to London, and organize a little society of painters, actors, and writers, all lovers of truth, and sworn to stand or fall together. Why not a Truth Company as well as a Gala Company?—*l'un vaut bien l'autre*. Now I think of it, there is, I believe, a company and a steam-engine for everything but truth.

"I have finished my novel, 'Peg Woffington;' I don't know whether it is good or not. I wish to Heaven I had a housekeeper like Molière. No man can judge his own work. I hope now to work out my *forte*, criticism. But how purposeless, hopeless, and languid I feel. On the other hand, I know that if I don't do something soon, some still more ignorant ape will fly the subject before the public, and take the bread out of my mouth. It is horrible how an idea never occurs to a single person, always to three. It is a feature of the day.

"August 10.—I have sketched the plot of an original drama ; I am studying for it a little. One of my characters is to be a thief. I have the *entrée* of Durham Gaol, and I am studying thieves. I have got lots of their letters, and one or two autobiographies from the chaplain. But the other subject, the gold-diggings, makes me very uneasy. I feel my lack of facts at every turn. On the subject I wish I had some one I could consult ; but it is utter solitude here. I have no friend, no acquaintance that knows

Sound	from Noise,
Bombast	from Sublime,
Beauty	from the Beast,
Smell	from Stink,
	or
II	from II."

The next few sentences in the diary, at different dates, may strike the reader as being a little hysterical. They lead up, however, to a paragraph which may be termed a revelation of the method of novel-manufacture which Charles Reade invented. Few, if indeed any, among those who achieved literary fame have set themselves a task so laborious, and one necessitating such conscientious self-sacrifice. It was to the faithful following of this same hard rule that he was indebted for the magnificent success of "It is Never Too Late to Mend," a work which, in extent of circulation, rivalled that of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and elevated its author at once to the first rank of novelists. He had already laid the foundation of his future reputation in "Peg Woffington," the drama of "Masks and Faces" in novel form. He was preparing to follow it up by "Christie Johnstone," a book based on his own herring-fishery adventures. But these two were mere

genre pictures. His *chef d'œuvre* was impending, and here, in these rough notes, he narrates how it was composed. It was a double drama, so to speak, the first part having for its moral the cruel Nemesis of society on moral error; the second the *auri sacra fames*, which at the moment invested the Australian diggings with so weird an interest. He here narrates how he actually collected material for the former, how he proposed to obtain it for the latter.

"Sept. 27, Magd. Col., Oxford.—Have nearly finished a great original play, a drama in four acts, containing the matter and characters that go to a five-act piece. I suppose I must go to London to push it.

"Mem.—Not to let it go out of my hands. Not to trust it in any theatre, because there are plenty of blackguards about, and any fool could write a play that would go down upon this subject. I am glad in one way of having written this play. I want to show people that, though I adapt French pieces, I can *invent* too, if I choose to take the trouble. And it *is* a trouble to me, I confess.

"I am divided about my plans. I think I have only two talents—dramatic and critical. Of these, the best policy seems to be to try the first, and make it lead to the second. I shall need much encouragement and sympathy to support me under the struggle. Where to find it—them?

"The head of this society enters on his 98th year to-day.

"Oct. 23, London.—Charles Reade in account with literature—

Dr.	£	s.	d.	Cr.
Pens, Paper, Ink,				
Copying,	11	11	0	0
Brains,	4000	0	0	
	4011	11	0	

“List of my unacted plays: 1. ‘The Way Things Turn.’ 2. ‘Peregrine Pickle.’ 3. ‘Marguerite.’ 4. ‘Honor before Title.’ 5. ‘Masks and Faces.’ 6. ‘Gold.’ 7. ‘Nance Oldfield.’ 8. ‘The Dangerous Path.’ 9. ‘The Hypochondriac.’ 10. ‘Fish, Flesh, and Good Red Herring.’ 11. ‘Rachel the Reaper.’* I don’t remember the rest. I am a little soured, and no wonder.

“Just had a civil note from Kean, inviting me to read my drama to him. This is the first bright speck in my present destiny.

“June 14, 1853, Magd. Coll.—My capacity for labor seems wonderfully faint. I have scarcely written a page since ‘Christie J.’ Still, I ought to make a great hit with my drama ‘Gold.’ The very first work on modern Judaism I took up showed me just what I had calculated on in coming here, that the Jews are a people of whom we know nothing, and who know nothing about the Christian religion. Here is one of those rich veins with which a hit is to be made. If I had but patience to read, I could write the subject, I know, when I had the facts. Mem. If ever I write a novel on ‘Gold,’ introduce a Jew and a learned Divine (Chaplain of Tom Robinson’s gaol), who meet with a holy horror of each other, battle, argue, find they were both in the dark as respects each other, and that all supposed monsters are men—no more, no less.

“June 17, 1853.—Busy correcting proofs of ‘Christie Johnstone.’ Fear there is an excess of dialogue in it. I think I ought to throw some of that into narrative. Mrs. Seymour thinks there is too much criticism in it. I have no doubt there is. These are defects to me which

* “Dec., 1852.—‘Masks and Faces’ has been pretty successful. Am now writing a Scotch story, and Bentley offers to publish on the same terms as ‘Peg Woffington.’”

judgment cannot correct. I lack the true oil of Fiction, and I fear she will have to inspire me, as well as reform me. The drowned fisherman's scene was admired by Kinglake and by Tennyson ; but I feel how much more a thorough-bred narrator would have made of it.

"June 20.—The plan I propose to myself in writing stories will, I see, cost me undeniable labor. I propose never to guess where I can know. For instance, Tom Robinson is in gaol. I have therefore been to Oxford Gaol and visited every inch, and shall do the same at Reading. Having also collected material in Durham Gaol, whatever I write about Tom Robinson's gaol will therefore carry (I hope) a physical exterior of truth.

"George Fielding is going in a ship to Australia. I know next to nothing about a ship, but my brother Bill is a sailor. I have commissioned him to describe, as he would to an intelligent child, a ship sailing with the wind on her beam—then a lull—a change of wind to dead aft, and the process of making all sail upon a ship under that favorable circumstance.

"Simple as this is, it has never been done in human writing so as to be intelligible to *landsmen*.

"One of my characters is a Jew—an Oriental Jew. It will be his fate to fall into argument not only with Susan Merton, but with the Chaplain of my gaol. It will be my business to show what is in the head and in the heart of a modern Jew. This entails the reading of at least eight considerable volumes ; but those eight volumes read will make my Jew a Truth, please God, instead of a Lie.

"My story must cross the water to Australia, and plunge after that into a gold mine. To be consistent with myself, I ought to cross-examine at the very least a dozen men that have farmed, dug, or robbed in that land.

If I can get hold of two or three that have really been in it, I think I could win the public ear by these means. Failing these I must read books and letters, and do the best I can. Such is the mechanism of a novel by Charles Reade. I know my system is right; but unfortunately there are few men so little fitted as myself to work this system. A great capacity for labor is the first essential. Now I have a singularly small capacity for acquisitive labor. A patient, indomitable spirit the second. Here I fail miserably. A stout heart the third. My heart is womanish. A vast memory the fourth. My memory is not worth a dump.

“Now, I know exactly what I am worth. If I can work the above great system, there is enough of me to make one of the writers of the day; without it, NO, NO.

“June 21, M. C.—To-day I sat out upon the lawn and scribbled six hours. There are about six days in every English summer that one can write out of doors without the paper being blown away and writer drenched. This was one. It ended in thunder and rain.

“June 24.—That humbug J. wants to cheat me out of my due, under cover of his leading actress. Have told him I will sue him. Think I shall tell her so too. A good thundering quarrel would stir me up out of this wretched state of stagnation, and I’m just in the humor, ready for all the world (except one), like a porcupine in cold weather.

“June 29, Reading.—That wretch Bentley has not sent me the revised proofs of ‘Christie Johnstone,’ and I wanted to give the book to my mother on her birthday (July 7). She will be eighty, yet she went yesterday ten miles in a fly, and wandered about the woods in a pony-gig besides.

“July 8, Magd. Coll.—Spent several hours in Reading Gaol yesterday. I hope that tree will bear fruits.

“There was one gaol-bird reading the Bible in Hebrew.

“July 10.—Went to hear the assize sermon and see the judges. Awful to behold. Going to the criminal court to-morrow. I made myself cry to-day writing a bit of my story, ‘Never Too Late to Mend.’ Is that a good sign? Laura Seymour says I have pathos. I suspect I shall be the only one to snivel.

“July 17.—Went to-day to the chapel of Reading Gaol. There I heard and saw a parson drone the liturgy, and hum a commonplace dry-as-dust discourse to two hundred great culprits and beginners.

“Most of those men’s lives have been full of stirring and thrilling adventures. They are now by the mighty force of a system arrested in their course, and for two whole hours to-day were chained under a pump, which ought to pump words of fire into their souls; but this pump of a parson could not do his small share—so easy compared with what the police and others had done in tracking and nabbing these two hundred foxes one at a time. No, the clerical pump could not pump, or would not.

“He droned away as if he had been in a country parish church. He attacked the difficult souls with a buzz of conventional commonplaces, that have come down from book of sermons to book of sermons for the last century; but never in that century knocked at the door of a man in passing—nor ever will.

“The beetle’s drowsy hum!!!

“Well, I’m not a parson; but I’ll write one, and say a few words in my quiet, temperate way about this sort of thing.

“But la! it doesn’t become me to complain of others.

Look at myself. Can't write 'Never Too Late to Mend,' which is *my business*.

"Aug. 22, London. — Tom Taylor has made me over his chambers. They are in a healthier part than Covent Garden, and I feel as if I could set to work. My plans: I will work hard at my tale of 'Gold,' whether under that title or another. I will hunt up two men who have lived in Australia, and are very communicative; from them I will get real warm facts. I will visit all the London prisons, and get warm facts from them for the Robinson business. I will finish the 'Box Tunnel' for Bentley's *Miscellany*. I will write plays with Tom Taylor—his exuberance makes it easy. I will prepare for publication a series of stories under one title. I will play steadily for hits. I will not be worse than the public—or not too much so. I will write better than 'Christie Johnstone.' The story there is dry and husky. I will live moderately. I will take decisive measures for being out of bed at eight."

CHAPTER XVI.

VICE-PRESIDENT.

THE year 1851 brought Charles Reade to Oxford. It was his turn to act as Vice-President, and there were many reasons why he should hesitate before declining that honorable post. First, it would add at least £100 to his pocket-money, besides diminishing the cost of living to a merely nominal sum. Secondly, he would have a Demyship to give to one of his nephews. And thirdly, the year was one of critical importance both to the college and its individual Fellows. Lord John Russell's Commission had descended on Magdalen like the wolf on the fold, and though President Routh sent a defiant reply to the Queen's Commissioners, to the effect that he declined to render an account of revenues he was not conscious of having misused, the sober spirits of the college recognized the advisability of coming to terms with the enemy. There was a general desire that Charles Reade should act as their second in command, for poor old Dr. Routh, verging on a hundred, was an embarrassment rather than a bulwark.

In fine, Charles Reade yielded to the request of his family and his college, and "at the end of all things"—alias Feb. 2.—assumed the functions of Vice-President for a twelvemonth.

He rendered signal service to the college. The Commissioners were anxious to convert the Fellows into sti-

pendiaries, at fixed salaries, in order that the balance of revenue might be available for educational and professorial objects. Some of the Fellows rather favored this project. But Charles Reade warned them that by so doing they would cease to be masters in their own house, and that the control of their vast estates would virtually pass from them. The contest between the College and their Parliamentary inquisitors raged during his year of office, and continued afterwards for several years.

Three nephews were eligible for the Demyship in Charles Reade's nomination. He selected the fittest in every way, the son of his beautiful and brilliant sister Julia, Allen Gardiner the younger, who fully justified his uncle's patronage by a first-class in the schools, and a subsequent career of heroic devotion as a missionary in Chili.*

* Young Allen Gardiner had barely settled in college as Demy, when in the middle of term the papers devoted several columns to the harrowing account of the death of his father, Captain Allen F. Gardiner, R.N., on the coast of Tierra del Fuego by starvation—he attempted to obtain a settlement on the mainland for missionary purposes, but owing to some inexplicable bungling the provisions which were to have been forwarded to him and his crew never reached them. It was the habit of his son, the young Demy, immediately after morning chapel, to retire to his rooms, and read a chapter of the Bible. This voluntary act of devotion saved him a rude shock. The terrible news had been communicated to the press, and not to the martyred sailor's family; hence, Allen Gardiner was in happy ignorance of his noble father's tragic end. His friends in the Junior Common Room chanced to catch a glimpse of the awful news, and at once removed all newspapers from the room, so that when Allen Gardiner entered it to breakfast, he was spared a sudden blow. In the interim they hurried to Mr. R. F. Hessey, the junior tutor, who undertook to break the news to his promising pupil, and did so with the delicacy and tact of a scholar and a gentleman. The brave fellow bore up against this crushing misfortune; but then and there registered a vow that his father should not have died in vain, a vow kept with fidelity. He founded no less than

Magdalen was for many years Charles Reade's hardest workshop. Whenever he was behindhand to any serious extent with his copy, John Brooker, his faithful servant, received a wire that his master was already *en route* from Paddington, and a braised shoulder of lamb, or mutton, with a tart to follow, was ordered for 3 P.M., the author's normal dinner-hour. The rooms he occupied in No. 2 New Buildings were scantily furnished, MSS. and books littering in heaps on the floor, the walls being decorated with looking-glasses instead of pictures. During his year of Vice-Presidency he labored unremittingly with his pen, receiving the formal visits of members of the college with Bohemian informality in his shirt-sleeves, and not quite earning the appreciation of his brother Fellows by neglecting their high table and senior common room. Yet such was the natural dignity of the man, that in no one instance had he to encounter familiarity or disrespect. If in his shirt-sleeves, if seated in the centre of a chaos of paper and ink; if again so absent that sometimes he omitted to answer a direct question, he none the less held his own. His manner was far from slovenly, neither in truth was his dress, which erred in being rather *outré*. He shaved in those days punctiliously, and his linen was faultless. It was impossible for the most self-assertive to take a liberty with him; and when, on an occasion, a tradesman, whose bill had remained in abeyance for some years, thought fit to relieve his pent-up feelings at the expense of those of the Vice-President, he repented his temerity. There never was a Vice-President quite of the same pattern before him, nor will be after him. Enough, that there have been

seventeen congregations on the seaboard of Chili, and only retired from that sphere of work—pre-eminently his own—when he was passed over for the Bishopric of the Falklands.

many his inferiors, and none altogether his equal, even in the art of ruling a college so as to insure discipline without making matters disagreeable all round.

In this same year he contrived to enact the parts of diplomatist and don, playwright and novelist, with a cool and clear head. He was, moreover, still young enough to relish the cricket field and the river, and to shoot over the college estate at Tubney. Never during his fifty years of Fellowship was he on more cordial terms with the society; perhaps because they began to perceive his merit, and were wise enough to court the rising sun. He revived archery, bowls, and skittles within the college walls, and would spend the hours of the morning, when the men were undergoing the prolonged torture of the lecture-room, in pacing the entire length of the New Buildings, not under cover of the cloister, but on the grass-plot, between the New and Founder's Buildings. Oddly enough, he seldom affected Addison's Walk, but would tramp with a rapid shuffling step to and from the sunk fence of The Grove to the edge of the Cherwell, in utter oblivion of the scouts and others who constantly crossed his path. So far as can be judged, his plan was to think out a scene, and while thought was still hot and fresh in his memory, to dash upstairs, and commit it to MS. with a rapidity that rendered his copy decipherable by himself only, and his faithful copyist, one Saunders. He certainly resented bitterly any interruption of his reveries; and when a member of the college, however senior he might be, elected to stop his progress and essay to inveigle him in gossip, the chances were that he met with a cool, if not a rude, reception.

Oxford, moreover, was an unexceptionable place for study. The Bodleian Library, with its ready and civil attendants, the splendid modern library of the Union

Society, and the College Library, all gave him literary material. Eschewing Chapel and Hall, and combining, as we have endeavored to show, for the most part work and exercise, he covered a very wide field in a very short time; for he was never idle, and to stimulate his brain drank strong tea at intervals from his three o'clock dinner till he retired to bed. It was the life of an individual, not of a gregarious human being; of one, moreover, who conceived himself to be isolated in his academic home. Of all the Fellows then in residence, Dr. Bloxam, a gentleman who labored incessantly in the domain of antiquarian research, alone inspired him with interest.

Not that he ever possessed the slightest affinity with mediævalism, as such. To the past he looked as to a mine, rich in dramatic material, and hence perhaps recognized in the antiquarian a man to supply him, if needful, with suitable stage accessories. It may seem very business-like to regard history as a collection of unrehearsed tragedies and comedies; yet so devoted was Charles Reade to his art, that although he hated horrors constitutionally and had fainted at the sight of blood, he blasphemed his evil-fortune piteously because he arrived on the scene of an accident five minutes too late. It was the Commemoration, and he was strolling back from Iffley with his nephews, when he remarked a huge pool of blood on the tow-path. The Exeter College barge, returning from Nuneham with a picnic-party, had been driven by a man who neglected to spare his beast. The horse waited till the rope was loosed, and then in revenge lashed out on his tormentor with his hind-feet, and, catching the poor wretch full on the temples, killed him then and there.

His nephews remonstrated with this strange mood of his; whereupon he rejoined, "*Segnius irritant animos*

demissa per aures quam quæ sicut oculis subjecta fidelibus."

"But," they replied, "the sickening horror of the scene!"

"*Il faut souffrir pour être belle,*" was his apology.

It was characteristic of Charles Reade's intense thoroughness that he never went to books for material, except when he could not obtain it from his own, or other's, experience. His strongest scenes were those which he was able to construct out of phenomena of his own observation; and next, those which he threshed out by conversations with men who had actually witnessed them. His motto was, that you could not be *too* truthful, provided always that you could escape the error of verbosity. It was with the design of gaining impressions, to be reproduced dramatically, that he roamed from jail to jail, and strove to gain the confidence of jail-birds. Such an exercise must, notwithstanding, have been to him as penitential as the spectacle of a fatal accident would have been harrowing to his feelings, for he was naturally, under a chilly and reserved exterior, one of the softest-hearted of his sex. Yet he knew, as by prescience, that the stage and dramatic narration were both destined to advance from the artificiality of contemporary novelists—whose characters were fantoccini and whose plots dragged even when they did not drivel—towards accurate realism. True, he differed from the most philosophical of accurate realists in his passion for dramatic situations, even when they transgressed by sensationalism. But his ideal was closer to that of George Eliot than might have been presupposed, having regard to the marked distinction between their style and method; and, as we have seen, in order to follow that ideal he was ready to immolate sensibilities which naturally were most acute.

He also, who as a young undergraduate Demy had covered the panels of his college rooms with all the witticisms he heard and read, in the first days of his successful authorship began both to collect material in commonplace books, which ere his decease had swollen to huge proportions, and further to study the canons of style and method,* or rather to frame them for his own guidance. He desired above all things to combine conciseness with perspicuity, and to write in such wise that his reader should never skip a line. To this end he scribbled memoranda for his own guidance, whenever an idea seized on his imagination. The fac-simile on following page will give an idea of the severity wherewith he was disciplining both his brain and his pen.

With the termination of his year of Vice-Presidency his official connection with Oxford ceased. He retained his five rooms in Magdalen, and visited them occasionally, preferring the depth of the long vacations, when the college was quite empty. His spell of residence, however, at

* Mr. Walter Besant has commented with singular felicity in *The Gentleman's Magazine* on Charles Reade's method: "Strength, truth, animation," he says, "these are three excellent qualities for a novelist to possess. They will not be denied to Charles Reade even by his enemies. There is, however, a great deal more. He is a scholar and a student. He says himself, 'I studied the great art of Fiction closely for fifteen years before I presumed to write a line. I was a ripe critic before I became an artist.' He has approached art therefore in the truest spirit, that of a resolute student, who knows that there is much to learn, but is conscious of his powers. I know no other example in history of a writer who deliberately proposed to become a novelist, and spent fifteen years in preparation for his work. . . . The possession, then, of scholarship which gives judgment, taste, and discernment, strength of treatment, clearness of vision, fidelity of portraiture, fidelity of incident, the careful study of art, the life of action, truth in facts—these are qualities which seem by themselves to justify a place in the very first rank."

Mem. | Study Holms for this
and get his technical eye.
it's a hint from Cratchit Hall it -
but must of all of normal records
the point of truth a success

Mem! invent some strokes in S.S. style

Mem! When in some you find
yourself about to say any thing
pull up and ask "can't I make
me of my own. P.S. say it - if you
can always do ~~Conform your~~ ~~fail!~~

any one time never exceeded six, and rarely attained to three weeks. He soon wearied of the place and its uncongenial surroundings, although anterior to 1854 he was far more comfortable in college than in town. He himself alludes to the discomfort of his Covent Garden lodgings; and certainly those of Tom Taylor, to which he succeeded, deserved to be styled burrows in contrast with his beautiful rooms in the New Buildings, facing on the south the cloisters and towers of ancient Magdalen, and on the north overlooking The Grove, with its browsing deer and the romantic water-walk associated with the name and fame of Addison, but equally so really with that of Collins and Christopher North. The chambers of Tom Taylor were over what was then the publishing house of Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in Piccadilly, and the bedroom was little larger than a cupboard. The situation of course was admirable from a town point of view, but much the reverse of sanitary; indeed, the move to Bolton Row later on afforded Charles Reade the space he of all authors most needed, over and above the minimum cubic inches of oxygen essential for health and vigorous brain power. Yet it was partly in College and partly in Piccadilly that he wrote his three first novels, together with his original drama "Gold."

From the commencement of his acquaintance with Mrs. Seymour, who persistently spurred her friend's Pegasus, Charles Reade's life may be designated as a record counterminous with his books, plays, letters, and lawsuits. Nevertheless, on two notable occasions after his year of Vice-Presidency, he descended on Magdalen College as a *Deus ex machinâ*, to save the Fellows from blunders which they were only too eager to perpetrate. Not long afterwards he declared that he would write a novel called "The Pres-

ident and Fellows," merely to show the world how exceedingly silly a quasi-ecclesiastical corporation can be. The theme, however, could not have been inspiring, for the terrible menace ended as it began, in mere talk.

The first of these occasions was in 1854. Poor old Martin Joseph Routh, in his hundredth year, had ceased to exist on Christmas-eve. The veneration accorded to extreme age was never more thoroughly exhibited than by the college and its individual members, from the highest to the humblest. Routh had been President sixty-three years. He baptized his wife as an infant. He admitted the grandson of Cox, the Esquire Bedell, a man he had previously, *i. e.*, some sixty years before, also admitted, as chorister of the college. His regulation topic of conversation was the Young Pretender and the Jacobite faction. His diction, when he chanced to be out of temper, which was seldom, was as full-flavored as that of another Martin, the beacon of the Reformation. He never appeared without a full-bottomed wig adorning his venerable cranium. His favorite joke was to inquire after people long since dead, and on being informed of their decease to express astonishment. He hated the tutors of the College beyond expression, and desired that Dr. Bloxam, the antiquarian, should be his successor. His politics were those of Stafford, his religion that of Laud, and it is to his influence that the American Episcopal Church is indebted for the real, or imaginary, Apostolic succession, inasmuch as he persuaded Seabury to obtain episcopal consecration from the Scotch Bishops.

This old man's autocratic temper was extraordinary.*

* Very rarely Dr. Routh visited London, but when he did venture so far from the academic shades, he always travelled by a coach called the "Star." Now as time passed and competition had increased, the owners of this coach

The Cæsar of Magdalen, he was wont to affirm that any member of the Foundation, not being a Fellow, could be turned out *nutu Præsidis*. Armed, however, as he believed himself to be, with such absolute authority, he so used it as to render his college one of the least disciplined in Oxford. When a Demy appeared three days after the commencement of term, having in fact been detained in London by the paramount claims of self-indulgence, and when the tutors suggested that the gentleman should be rusticated for this offence, Routh at once had them on the hip.

"Three days late, is he?" whimpered the old fellow in his childish treble. "Well, sirs, there has been a heavy fall of snow, and as the gentleman resides in Norfolk, no doubt the coaches have been detained along the road!"

"But," urged the tutors, "he could have reached Oxford in a few hours by railway."

"Railway?" quoth Dr. Routh, incredulously. "Ah, well, I don't know anything about that!" and so with the typical flea in its ear minor authority was dismissed.

The old man refused to believe in the existence of the G.W.R., whose whistle he heard every day of his life.

On another occasion one of the choral clerks happened to have been in residence some three years and three quarters, but had not succeeded in passing "Smalls," the examination usually surmounted after three months' resi-

found it desirable to reduce the fares; Dr. Routh alighted, as was his wont, in Oxford Street, and was assisted respectfully by the coachman, to whom he handed £1 7s. 6d.—twenty-five shillings the fare, and half a crown the gratuity to John—who, as the money was being paid to him, said, "The fare, Mr. President, is reduced to a guinea." Dr. Routh paused and reflected. "Sir," he replied, "I always have paid twenty-five shillings, and I always shall." Needless to add, a reverential bow expressed the submission of the recipient to this solemn decision, by which he reaped the benefit of an extra four shillings.

dence. The junior tutor called to request that this gentleman should be removed from the college. The venerable President at once assumed an expression of extreme astonishment. "I don't know anything about your examinations," he replied to the complaining don. "Have you anything to say as regards the gentleman's moral character or conduct?" The tutor responded in the negative. "Then," cried the President in an outburst of righteous indignation, "how dare you come here, sir, to attack a respectable member of the college? His father, sir, is a friend of my friend, the Bishop of Bath and Wells; and I will not listen, sir, to any such frivolous allegations!"

The poor human fossil was writing a book—one of the sort that nobody reads—when the dread summons sounded; and, oddly enough, though it was virtually impossible that his life could be prolonged, everybody seemed startled by his death. It came upon the college like an earthquake; and men felt that they had lost a father, for Dr. Routh, *malgré* his eccentricities, was the true friend of every member of his splendid Foundation, and had a long memory for faces far remote from Oxford influences. Sawell, one of the senior chaplains, hurried to his bedside to kiss his cold remains, and the Fellows resolved that he should have the grandest funeral that could be organized, and repose in front of the altar in the College Chapel. Charles Reade was in London laboring at "It is Never Too Late to Mend," with a good heart, thanks to the indisputable success of "Christie Johnstone;" but no sooner did the news reach him than he hurried to Oxford the first train. *Le roi est mort!—Vive le roi!* would be the next cry; but, under which King, Bezonian? That was the question, and one fraught with great anxiety for every Fellow of Magdalen.

The College was as yet unreformed and unmutilated. It was still battling the Queen's Commissioners, though not with the same pluck wherewith it had resisted King James II. Much depended, therefore, on the character of the man selected for its head, in succession to Dr. Routh. If they elected a Liberal, the Commissioners would be emboldened to increase their demands, for the rent-roll of Magdalen had risen to quite £30,000 a year, and that lump sum constituted *für plunder*. Besides, all the little colleges were bitterly envious of rich and beautiful Magdalen, and burning with anxiety that it should be despoiled. This election, therefore, was a crucial one; and Charles Reade had registered a mental resolve that he would carry his friend Bulley, a Tory, a High-Churchman, but by no means a bigot, a sound Greek scholar, and the son of the Reading Doctor, who had administered to the corporeal necessities of Ipsden House. Bulley was then senior tutor, and in respect of dignity of manner rivalled one of his sire's patients, Lord Stowell. He was reticent, cautious, and yet genial in a quiet way. He never did a foolish thing, and never said a wise one.

On the other side was Andrew Edwards, ex-Mathematical tutor, a mild reformer, and so charming a gentleman that it seems almost astonishing he was not elected by acclamation. But for his Liberal principles his claims would have outweighed those of Bulley; and, as it was, he ran him close.

Thirdly, there was the then Vice-President, Mr. Harris, who was supposed to be a more pronounced Liberal than Mr. Edwards, and withal personally acceptable to the junior Fellows. He was barely forty-two years of age, whereas Edwards was fifty-six, and Bulley forty-eight. The election, as will appear, was conducted on such lines

that Mr. Harris might have come in but for Charles Reade's timely interference—this with every apology to the unsuccessful candidate. But first, before the new sovereign of our academical state could be elected, the obsequies of the monarch deceased had to be performed with due solemnity. Mr. Harris, as President *pro tem.*, had the arrangements in his hands, and carried them out perfectly. Unfortunately the old organ had been removed, and the glorious new instrument, the *chef d'œuvre* of Messrs. Gray & Davison, was not yet *in situ*, while the ante-chapel presented an appearance of unseemly litter. The choral service, therefore, was necessarily unaccompanied; but Mr. Blyth, the organist of that epoch, boasted some of the noblest treble singers in England, and certainly as the procession moved from the College Hall round the picturesque cloisters to the Chapel, the effect of Croft and Purcell's weird strains was most sublime. Among the Fellows who clustered round the gaping grave, wherein, with the proud "C" on his coffin, were deposited the remains of their President, none in his surplice and doctor's hood looked more impressed, or presented in himself a more impressive figure, than Charles Reade. It may have occurred to some, even then, that there stood the grand man with the grand mind, who ought to have been President, the one Fellow of the entire body worthy to be the pediment of so noble a Foundation. That, however, was out of the question. They wanted a pedant for their President, and had Shakespeare, Milton, and Byron offered themselves, they would have preferred some academical mediocrity. It was clearly understood that there was to be no nonsense of merit about the Presidential election. Nobody outside the College walls had ever heard of such names as Bulley, Edwards, or Harris. They resembled nothing more than

Dickens's "Noakes, or Stokes, or Brown, or Styles," all estimable gentlemen, let it be freely admitted; nevertheless, the most exalted positions in the first of English universities ought, one would imagine, to be reserved for those who have made their mark, and earned an undying reputation. As it was, the choice lay between three worthy pigmies; and now let us hear what the mammoth who was backer of one of these pigmies has to say:

"It is past one o'clock. I have been employed actively ever since nine, driving an idea into some of the thickest skulls I have ever encountered. It is a most fortunate thing for the Rev. F. Bulley that I came down here this evening. I don't know whether he will be President of Magdalen or not; but this I know, that but for me some five to seven of his supporters would have been cajoled into cutting his throat to-morrow. I will explain this to you at a future time. It is a matter of figures, very curious, and may perhaps amuse you to see the blunder they were about to fall into—

"*Tenez.* I will try and explain it now:

"There are 37 Fellows, all of whom are compelled in the first instance to give two distinct votes. The result of this process is, that there will be at the head of the poll two Fellows. Then these two Fellows are sent up to the 13 senior Fellows, who choose one of them for President.

"The struggle lies between three men—Bulley (my friend and the favorite), Edwards, and Harris. Now, out of the 37 men I believe there are 20 men who wish Bulley to be President; and if the said Bulley could be placed first, or even second upon the first process, there is no doubt that the 13 seniors would choose him. But here is

the grand oversight they have all made. Harris's men have been cajoling Bulley's men to give Harris or Edwards their second vote, and most have agreed to; but Harris's men may give all their second votes to Edwards, and Edwards's *vice versa* to Harris, and in point of fact this will be the case. Now see the result of this:

"Bulley's 20 friends register for Bulley 20 votes, for Edwards 10, and for Harris 10. Seventeen men remain, of whom 12 are Harris's friends, 5 Edwards's; but out of this number, who all hate Bulley, no one will go to Bulley, but 17 to Harris, and 17 to Edwards.

"Result. Harris, 27 votes; Edwards, 27 votes; and Bulley, 20.

"N. B. Each Fellow *must* vote for two people.

"Upon these figures Bulley would never be sent up to the 13 seniors at all, and either Harris or Edwards must be the President.

"The error Bulley's friends have all fallen into may be thus stated:

"Thirty-seven men, with two votes each, are 74 votes; but Bulley's friends have counted them as only 37 votes, and his 20 votes have appeared to make him safe, and so 20 out of 37 would; but it is 20 out of 74, and the odd 54 will put two men above Bulley and destroy him.

"Here is another way of stating it. Bulley has more friends than Harris and Edwards put together; but Harris and Edwards have *no enemies*, and Bulley has 17 enemies who cabal to keep him out *coute que coute*, whereas Bulley's poor simpletons give their second votes indiscriminately to Harris and Edwards, or were going to; but I have stopped some of them, thank Heaven. I wish you had seen me attacking this blunder. I wish you had seen the pains it cost me to make them see it.

“I wish you had seen the complacent supineness of Bulley’s friends, their cool ridicule of the idea that with 20 friends out of 37 he could run any risk. I wish you could have seen their faces as I succeeded in convincing them, not only that their friend was not safe if they played the fool with their second votes, but that by G— he *had not the ghost of a chance*, which is the plain fact. I was hours before I could get them to realize this; however, I swore in a little band who promised me to neutralize their second vote, and to enforce the necessity of this on their friends. I think we shall certainly neutralize half; in other words, I hope out of Bulley’s 20 friends, 10 will now give him *virtual plumpers* by giving their second vote to any one except Edwards or Harris. Thus Bulley will have 20 votes; 10 votes will be put out of the play, and 44 will remain for Edwards and Harris, and here is a grand chance for Bulley. There will be a few muddle-heads in the enemies’ camp as well as ours, and if they do not divide their 44 votes *cetera desunt*.”

The two candidates sent up to the 13 Seniors for their final decision were Bulley and Edwards, and the former scored seven to Edwards’s five. Harris, as Vice-President, had the determining vote, but had he gone for Edwards, Bulley would still have scored a majority of one. Well might that worthy gentleman have exclaimed *sic me servavit Apollo*; for if Charles Reade, D.C.L., had not come down by the evening train in the nick of time, Mr. Harris, at present the esteemed pastor of Winterbourne Bassett, would now be President of Magdalen.

The next occasion when Charles Reade interposed his brain to safeguard the interests of his brother Fellows

was about two years later. From 1851, when President Routh openly defied the Royal Commission, to 1858, when a compromise between the views of the Commissioners and those of the College was finally settled, everything was in abeyance. The Commissioners, being rapacious, were more anxious to abstract a huge slice of the endowment of Magdalen than to reform or reorganize the college itself. To this end they offered the governing body, *i. e.*, the President and Fellows, a tempting bait. Each of these privileged persons in the future was to draw a fixed income from the College revenues, and this stipend was to be put at a higher figure than the existing dividends. In return, the said President and Fellows were to hand over the management and disposition of their estates to the Commissioners. They were no longer to be their own masters, but, as Charles Reade phrased it, to be stipendiaries in their own house. The Commission, however, had shown too much of its hand. One of its propositions was to suspend, or—in plain English—abrogate, ten Fellowships. Another was to found three Professorships out of the moneys saved by this interference with the Founder's arrangements. Now, it was very easy on these lines to make an arithmetic sum of the loss and gain to the dividends of the Fellows by some such experiment; and this same sum showed, that after the suppression of the ten Fellowships and the foundation of three Professorships at £600 a year each, the dividend would go up about 30 per cent. Yet, incredible though it may seem, some of the intelligent Fellows were ardently anxious to obliterate themselves, to barter away the independence of their college, and to lose money to the tune of 30 per cent. in order to gain an apparently immediate increment of a few sovereigns. There is no limit to human cupidity or hu-

man folly, and this piece of avaricious foolery simply incensed Charles Reade, who came down to fight the battle of common-sense against uncommon idiotey. He bore down all opposition with Rupertlike impetuosity, and had the satisfaction of feeling that his brain had been of real service to a set of people who seemed singularly deficient in that particular.

This is his account of his passage-at-arms. It reads like "*Veni, vidi, vici!*"

"We have been hard at it from 11 till 4. As I dine with the President (Bulley), I sit down now to scratch off a line before it is too late.

"Well, I made a *speech*, a long speech. And carried the college with me like one man.

"I was opposed by a fellow that is supposed to be influential; but I carried them with me, 19 votes to *one*, and sent up an amendment on a vital clause.

"If the Commissioners receive it, I may say:

"'I have saved the College that has been a good mother to me since I was 17 years of age.' The worst is, this has interrupted my story, but I hardly thought of Bentley once all day. Put that against it."

This success at a critical College meeting placed him on good terms with Magdalen, and induced him to dedicate the novel to which this letter refers, to

"*That ancient, learned, and most hospitable House.*"

Would that the kindly epithets had lasted!

CHAPTER XVII.

READE *vs.* BENTLEY.

HIS reference to Mr. Bentley has something in it almost pathetic. When, in obedience to the dictates of common-sense, he decided to convert into a novel his magnificent drama "Masks and Faces," the first fruit, as he deemed it, of his genius, he had been very well pleased to discover in Mr. Bentley a publisher willing to take him by the hand. The book was termed "Peg Woffington," and we may safely affirm, without fear of contradiction, that in the English language there exists no work of fiction written so concisely yet with such graphic force. It would be difficult to discover one word too many; even less easy to suggest how without detriment to the intensity of the interest a line of description could be added. We have already seen, from his own testimony, how he excised not a few of Taylor's picturesque superfluities from the play; nor was he less rigorous with his own copy. One winter's night he sat for several hours in the rooms in Magdalen of Dr. Harris Smith, younger brother of Canon Bernard Smith—number eight, Cloisters, first pair left—and pen in hand, essayed an epilogue to that play. At the moment he was pleased with his—shall we call it, doggerel? He read it, and reread it to the writer of these lines, requesting him to suggest something more euphonious for the concluding couplet, a task to which the brain of the said nephew, then but a schoolboy, was by no means equal. At

the risk of raising a smile we recall this moribund epilogue. It ran thus:

“ A hundred years have passed away
Since all these leaves fell from the tree.
The tree still blows as green as ever,
For artists perish, art dies never.
Cibber, and Woffington, and I,
Live but to make you laugh, and cry ;
And show you still, that here's the will,
The warm desire to please ye,
And find a way to make you stay
An hour with Fan or Peggy !”

First impressions, however, never left a lasting mark on an author whose powers of self-criticism and self-revision were unbounded, always premising that he was not hurried prematurely *in celeres iambos*, or any other form of printer's ink. Hence, out went these lines, together with some of the Taylorian embellishments, and “Masks and Faces” remains an eternal monument to the fidelity to art of honest authorship.

He preferred “Masks and Faces” to “Peg Woffington,” and in his inmost heart felt, as a matter of preference, that “the play's the thing !” Yet he had no cause to complain of the reception of his first literary essay. The *Times* led the way with a strong encomium; the reviews followed suit. Certainly Oxford was beyond measure delighted. The only grumble was, that he had not made “Peg Woffington” sufficiently Irish—indeed, it was privately hinted that he might recast the character on the lines of Lever with advantage. That, however, was hypercriticism. He introduced “Peg” as a leading lady on the London stage, not as a savage Irishwoman from Kerry; and he could hardly have been far wrong in his presump-

tion that she had learned the English language. Indeed, whether we regard this same conception as a drama, or as dramatic narration, we are lost in admiration of its gorgeous literary quality. Its author from first to last was jealous for its honor. For example, writing some years later from the Garriek Club to Mrs. Seymour at Brighton, he says, "You are right, I think, to play 'Masks and Faces' with Mrs. Wyndham and Toole. Tell me how you get on with it; and mind, nothing must be left to chance with respect to the picture. Talk to Toole. Show him in what state he is to take it on. And explain to him that he must not really strike it in the Third Act."

Again, in a letter to Mrs. Seymour from Paris, of the date probably 1852 or '53 (he *never* dated a letter), we find this reference to, apparently, the play, though he gives it the title of the novel:

"HÔTEL NATIONAL, RUE NOTRE DAME DES VICTOIRES, PARIS.

"You may imagine with what pleasure I saw your well-known hand.

"Heaven forbid that the fate of the leaf should be yours!

"See how dangerous are similes. You almost deserve that I should remind you that you are not the leaf, but the plant, which is not injured, happily, because it sacrifices a leaf to healing purposes.

"I am not in very good spirits about business. — has already brought out a play called '*Les Chercheurs d'Or*;' and, of course, this is an almost invincible obstacle to me.

"The theatres are very uninteresting. The weather is most oppressive to the spirits, so, as usual, *je suis triste*.

"We have translated the First Act of 'Peg Woffington,' and it looks well in French. My translator, who is a dramatic author, is satisfied with the First Act; and the action of the other two is quite as rapid, so I hope we shall do."

These brief excerpts will give an idea of how intensely his mind was wrapped up in "Peg"—call it drama, or call it novel—even while he was engaged on "Gold."

Never was a theme subjected to more careful, more loving elaboration.

"Peg Woffington," the novel, saw the light in the summer of 1853, the last year of the venerable George Stanley Faber's life. That able theologian, in the recesses of his study at Sherburn Hospital, read the book between 5 A. M., his invariable hour for rising, and 8.30, the family breakfast hour, and was simply entranced by his nephew's achievement. Strange to relate, he handed it to a rather clever Irish lady, his guest at the time, who in turn at dinner pronounced it to be "quite passable, but devoid of imagination"—*quot feminae tot sententiæ!* This was not the universal verdict of the sex. Mrs. Reade, for example, doffed her puritanism for the occasion, vowed that her Charles had done himself credit, but sent him with this warm meed of praise a loving hint that his mother hoped he would never write a word he need afterwards feel ashamed of. Perhaps we may hazard the assertion that the book did as well as the play. The latter, except in one particular, fared better subsequently under the stage management of Mrs. Bancroft. The former was the tentative effort of an unknown man. That alone will account for the sum handed to him by his publisher, on the half-profit system, reaching only the modest total of £30.

To say that the author was discouraged is to reveal an open secret. Still the reviews had spoken words of strong praise. He felt inspired to try again.

"Christie Johnstone" differs from "Peg Woffington" in being less concisely dramatic and more descriptive. It is a beautiful, because an ideal, story, and the plaudits of the press grew in volume and intensity. Here again, notwithstanding, the reading public only displayed a mild

avidity, and the author netted another miserable £30. This was indeed a sorry victory. He had evidently failed to command the popular ear, and his robust intellect did not fail to read the lesson of this *succes d'estime*. He perceived that he must paint on a bigger canvas, and color with varied and absorbing human interests. A weaker mind would have been dashed, and given up. His was spurred onwards to grander and more laborious exertions. He never lost faith in his *children*, as he fondly styled the products of his brain. Nor, as regards these two, was his paternal affection misplaced. "Peg" must be perennial. She has as much life in her as Lady Teazle. The character of Triplet alone would suffice to render either the novel or the play coeval with the English language. "Christie Johnstone," odd, epigrammatic, and angular as it may be termed, coruscates with a glorious tenderness, and when its author for once forgets to be terse, and launches into description, he gives us in the rescue scene one of the most vivid of word-pictures ever penned. He was right to love these two novels—blessed pair of sirens—the efflux of his earlier genius. The irony of fate decreed that just as he had to battle for his Fellowship, which was his own, so also for the copyrights of these novels.

The following is his own version of the struggle, which at the time affected him profoundly—we might almost say morbidly, for his fury against Messrs. Bentley was evanescent, and after his dearly bought victory entirely ceased. Perhaps it might be affirmed with truth that soon after the hatchet was buried the old sentiment of friendship revived. Certain it is, that both the Bentleys, father and son, *malgré* their defeat, entertained towards their antagonist feelings of the most chivalrous character. They fought him for what they imagined—as it proved erro-

neously—to be their legal rights. They lost, and they lost with a good grace. It is gratifying to reflect that his last as well as his first novel was issued by that eminent, liberal, and honorable firm.

“I produced,” he writes, “two novels in one vol. each, ‘Peg Woffington,’ ‘Christie Johnstone.’”

“These were published on what is called the half-profit system.

“Under this system, which encouraged many frauds, I received for those two successful works only £60—for the two.

“My publisher endeavored to seize on the copyright, which the agreement did not justify.

“I took proceedings and was defeated by a technicality.

“Costs £120.”

Publisher persisted. Reade went at him again, employed no counsel *this time*, and was victorious. But the judge, with manifest partiality, refused him costs.

“These came to £90.

“Receipts for two brilliant works, £60.

“Spent in protecting them from fraudulent appropriation, £220.

“Punishment for producing ‘Christie Johnstone’ and ‘Peg Woffington,’ £160.”

(N.B.—The funny part of this is that in his righteous indignation his arithmetic got hopelessly mixed; on his own showing his total costs were £210, his total receipts, £60. His penalty, therefore, £150.)

Then follows a dismal groan.

“After Reade had defeated this publisher, the other publishers held aloof from him. For years he could find no publisher, and was obliged to publish on commission. The weekly papers, being all under trade influence, persistently decried his works, and insulted him. But he

went doggedly on, publishing his own works in vol. form, and learning their commercial value."

Mr. George Bentley, and the Publishing Trade generally, will, we trust, pardon this inclusion of a characteristic memorandum. Into the merits of our author's quarrel with the publishers it would be superfluous to enter, if, indeed, such a quarrel existed outside the region of his sensitive imagination. That he benefited is most improbable. Mrs. Seymour gave him practical assistance of a very valuable kind, but he belonged to the class of penny-wise gentry who leave the pounds to shift for themselves; and it is a fact that he omitted to square accounts with the late Mr. Trübner for so many years that his claim was actually statute-run. Fortunately for him, he had to deal with a man of scrupulous integrity, and thus obtained his own. But it is none the less true that he was totally unconscious of Trübner being in his debt, just as sometimes he would forget for twelve or eighteen months to draw the check for his Fellowship from the Bursar of Magdalen.

From a business point of view, nevertheless, he was fully justified in rescuing his copyrights from Messrs. Bentley. At present these books are a genuine literary property, and have a steady sale. In short, if at the moment penalized to the extent of £150, and put to the excitement and trouble of two lawsuits, he amply recouped himself. Moreover, his victory was a memorable one, since, whereas in the first action, which failed, he employed as his counsel, Mr., afterwards Mr. Justice, Lush, a lawyer second only to Cockburn, who, nevertheless, broke down, in the second action he trusted solely to the forensic genius of Charles Reade, barrister at law of Lincoln's Inn, who never before had held a brief, but who none the less triumphed where Lush had failed.

Simultaneously with the publication of "Christie Johnstone" he sat down and wrote a critique of the book. He styles it in his MS.

"CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE,

AN

AUTO-CRITICISM."

Needless, perhaps, to add it was simply a *jeu d'esprit*, never intended, or offered, for publication, being, indeed, simply the author's candid notion of what an honest critic would say were he disposed to avoid the minimum alike of praise and blame. It runs thus:

"CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE.

"A DRAMATIC STORY.

"The origin of this title appears to be the quantity of pure dialogue in the work.

"To those effects in which the drama shines the volume before us makes less pretension than three novels out of four.

"We encourage this author to try again; but must tell him he has much to learn before he can hope to shine in this sort of fiction.

"To write a good novel, a supple and changeable style is required; but, above all, some warmth of imagination: this it is which clothes incidents with those glowing details that make them vivid and interesting.

"The author of 'Christie Johnstone' is full of details—but they are barren details. He deals in those minutiae which are valuable according to the hand that mixes them; but he has not the art of mixing his materials. Hence the compound, with some exceptions, is dry and lumpy.

"This is to be the more regretted as the materials are in themselves decidedly good.

"We have in this country some dozen ladies and gentlemen who have long ago written themselves dry; but any one of whom would have made a charming story with Mr. Reade's ideas.

"The plot, which is of that arbitrary kind that befits a play rather than a story, can be disposed of in few words:

"Like all weak plots, it runs in two channels, which are more independent than in rightly constructed fiction, whether story or play.

"A young, rich, handsome, clever Lord is ill and unhappy. He suspects as the cause Lady Barbara Sinclair's cruelty; but Saunders, his factotum, suspects his Lord's liver, and calls in Dr. Aberford, who, defying drugs, treats him as St. Luke might, and recommends him to make acquaintance with the lower orders, to hear and relieve their more substantial sorrows, to feel for them, and work like them. Off goes my Lord to Newhaven, and goes in for charity and perspiration. There Saunders, sent to catch lower orders, secures two beautiful young fishwives.

"One of these, Christie Johnstone, catechises our Viscount, and draws out his spark of enthusiasm, whose existence neither he nor Saunders suspected.

"She then puts him on the road of charity; he learns his first lesson about real afflictions from a fish-widow, and this scene, showing the man of society, whose heart is in him but asleep, with the woman of flesh and blood and sorrows, is well written, though exaggerated.

"In the course of time Lord Ipsden, after a long and fruitless search for adventures, heads a party of fishermen and relieves a distressed vessel in a gale of wind.

“But in the meantime he has fallen in with his cousin Lady Barbara, and revived his hopes. These hopes soon lead to mortification; for the lady, a pupil of Mr. T. Carlyle, has discovered a male pupil, and this pair run down the age together; and Lord Ipsden, whom she has always considered a mere saunterer, finds himself *de trop*. So he demolishes the earnest man in argument, and finds himself still more *de trop*.

“He quits her for a week; but meeting her accidentally on Leith sands, is received graciously. She tells him laughingly that the earnest man has received his *cong  * for running faster than herself from a bull; and bursts into rapturous applause of an heroic action she relates, and so embellishes that his Lordship only just recognizes his own feat. Her enthusiasm and his confusion are interrupted by the sudden arrival of the identical skipper who had been saved. This man pours out his manly gratitude and sheers off. Her ladyship, a fine, generous creature, though a goose, laughs, cries, makes the *amende*, and the rest may be imagined.

“The other thread of the story is the loves of Christie Johnstone and an enthusiastic young painter of genius. This personage has all the weakness as well as intellect of a great artist. His mother is determined to separate the lovers, and the poor eloquent vacillator is bandied about like a shuttlecock between two or three unintellectual women with more iron wills than he, till we are ready to throw the book at his head, and bid him pass it on to the writer.

“At last Christie Johnstone finds all this out by arriving suddenly on a stormy dialogue between the artist and his mother; and her pride and delicacy instantly close the discussion and prevent the rupture. She drops the ring

of betrothal between the mother and son, and ends the amour by gesture and silence that have something impressive.

“But her spirits and health suffer, and she pines secretly.

“The young artist is about to leave for England, and would fain part friends; but Christie dismisses him with a hauteur which ill represents her real feelings.

“Not long after, all Newhaven is watching a swimmer, who, it appears, is in the habit of going out to the roads and back. One spirit, quicker than the rest, compares the time, the tide, and other circumstances, and doubts the swimmer’s safety. This is Christie, who throws off her listlessness, and with her brother darts down to the pier, and goes out in a boat amidst the jeers of the others; before, however, she has made her first tack, the whole town has come to her opinion, and it is in front of three thousand spectators that she with difficulty and dexterity saves her lover without discovering his identity, which her brother, who hates him, is anxious to conceal from her.

“The feat has been seen by Lord Ipsden and Lady Barbara from the shore; and Mrs. Gatty, the artist’s mother, who had learned in the heat of the business that it was her son, has fainted and been carried to Christie Johnstone’s house.

“Thus a dramatic close is prepared.

“Christie appears on shore, her color and spirits restored by a brave action; the mother comes from behind one of the groups that were discussing the feat; the boy comes up with his hair dripping, and Christie’s name in his mouth.

“The mother sees him and runs to him.

“Christie runs too, and, no longer mistress of herself, in

going to fling her arms round him, flings them as it happens round her competitor, Mrs. Gatty.

“The old lady, a mighty stern sort of body, is still a woman ; she cannot resist this ; her heart speaks louder than her prudence and her years, and she embraces her daughter ; a fisherman blubbers, and everybody is happy, not excepting the sour critic — who finds himself at the end of the tale.

“Incidental to the story is an episode on a drowned fisherman, and the manner in which the calamity is broken to his wife.

“This is well imagined, but in the telling of it the true oil of fiction is somewhat wanting.

“We have also a description of two contemporaneous picnics on an island. One of them is composed of ladies and gentlemen ; the other of fishermen and fishwives. It is covertly and not without plausibility conveyed, that of the two the snobs are the only pretenders to intellect and *savoir vivre* in their amusements.

“In short, this writer has clearly a quick eye for all that is good and clever in the lower classes ; we welcome his aid, our own organs of vision having more than once failed to make these discoveries. And we thank him still more for his forbearance ; they who hold his sentiment seldom let us go to bed till they have told us that corduroy is virtue, and broadcloth and soap are vice : and we are in some terror lest through hearing this too often we may end our rational career by believing it.

“The author of ‘Christie Johnstone’ has good thoughts which he could clothe with logic, but he cannot yet dress them in the garb fiction requires. He should associate himself with one of our authoresses ; we have several whose abilities are his counterpart. He has plenty to tell

us and cannot tell it; they have nothing to say and say it to perfection.

“The pair would produce a novel considerably above the average; something we should read with pleasure and lay aside with delight.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

VICTORY !

WE now come to the supreme crisis in the literary life of Charles Reade—the moment when he awoke to find himself famous.

His quasi-home in Piccadilly had been a chronic source of annoyance in every way. Its nominal tenant was Mr. Samo, Mrs. Seymour's husband, but this individual was perpetually in hot water. Execution succeeded execution, each paid out with greater difficulty than its predecessor; until at last, with the design of securing comparative peace, Charles Reade was induced himself to become tenant of a spacious mansion in Bolton Row. Thither Mrs. Seymour moved her furniture and her lodgers, Captain Curling and Mr. Augustus Braham. It was an eccentric arrangement, but, thanks to a thorough understanding between all the parties concerned, worked admirably.

As for Samo the impecunious, he discovered a suitable retreat below stairs. He was now, poor man, no longer in his own house, and therefore at last free from the attentions of bailiffs. He enjoyed both ample provender and peace of mind, and it speaks volumes for the relations subsisting between his wife and her landlord, that he regarded the latter as his true and honest friend, and never evinced a *soupçon* of jealousy or suspicion.

It was in Bolton Row that Charles Reade completed his *Magnum Opus*. "Gold" had previously taken fairly with

a Drury Lane audience. The critics decried it as a failure, but the length of its run disproved their verdict. It was a thorough success, the lessee of Drury Lane, in the six weeks' run, netted a clear profit of £1500, and it provided an important element for the great novel.

"It is Never Too Late to Mend" may be said without qualification to have been the keystone of its author's fortune. Up to 1856, when it first saw the light, the public had held its judgment in suspense. "Peg Woffington" and "Christie Johnstone" both paved the way for their splendid successor. They prepared the minds of readers on either side of the Atlantic for the sequel. They had given *éclat* to their author's name, and, indeed, the public was already on the tiptoe of expectation for his next book. We must bear in mind that novelists of merit at that time of day were but few. Bulwer, Dickens, Samuel Warren, Thackeray, headed the list; and Mrs. Beecher Stowe had proved herself to be a one-book author. Boys read Smedley and Lever; sentimentalists Miss Yonge, while Jerrold and Albert Smith had their admirers. But George Eliot and Wilkie Collins, Ouida and Miss Bradon, were as yet unknown, and the public had not as yet been surfeited with fiction.

The book appeared. It might be presupposed from its colossal and lasting success that it was welcomed by the critics with a chorus of praise. Not so; criticism in this country has always exhibited the beautiful incertitude of cricket, and so perverted is its judgment, that, not infrequently, a book which is roundly rated has a better chance of gripping the public than one which is indiscriminately praised.

Nevertheless, the reviews were not all censorious; there were some few honorable exceptions. Here and there

might be discovered a pen with sufficient intelligence to appreciate dramatic narration which happened to be dramatic. For example, *The Critic*, then in the hands of the late Sergeant Cox, a publicist-gifted with rare brains and unimpeachable honesty, wrote thus: "*Paulo majora canamus!* Mr. Reade's novel, with the quaint and proverbial title 'It is Never Too Late to Mend,' is one of the very few first-rate works of fiction which we have met with in our life. It is a principle-novel, aimed against a system, and that system one of the most crying evils which affect mankind and disgrace humanity; it attacks that code of discipline which converts error into crime, crime into madness; which makes pickpockets burglars, and burglars murderers; which under the pretence of philanthropy inflicts tortures beside which the most cruel refinements of the Inquisition were as gentle mercies; which treats the criminal as a machine to be systematized and not as a soul to be saved; it is levelled at the solitary, separate, and silent system of treating criminals."

It would constitute a tax on patience were we to give *in extenso* the entirety of this admirable, because just, criticism. We cannot, however, forbear appending its utterances on Mr. Eden, Charles Reade's model parson:

"The jail scenes give occasion for the introduction of a character which we, without hesitation, pronounce to be one of the very best in the whole range of fiction. This is the chaplain of the jail, Mr. Eden; a man such as there are, we fear, but few in existence—a man, who, if he lived, would be one of those chosen few whom the Almighty sends upon the earth to soften the lot of poor, erring, miserable sinners; one of those very few who constitute, as it were, the salt of the human species. It will almost invariably be found that where the novelist introduces a clergyman upon

the scene, he falls either into one or other of two errors: either he represents him in an unfavorable light, as a canting, worldly-minded hypocrite, whose practices are the very reverse of his professions; or else he makes a saint of him, without one single feature of humanity in him, from the *gloria* round his head down to the soles of his martyred feet. Now, Mr. Eden is a man—a man of like passions with us all—a man who feels for another, and sympathizes with his weakness because he knows how weak his own heart is.”

In contrast to this straightforward criticism we have the acidulated analysis of *The Saturday Review*. That paper was then at its best. It was launched by Oxford and Cambridge men as a corrective of the Scotticism and Hibernicism of the press; its contributors were scholars and gentlemen, not short-hand writers and penny-a-liners from Edinburgh and Dublin. But in its zeal for thoroughness and accuracy it not infrequently became pedantic, and when it tried to be satirical succeeded only in being insolent. At the same time it must be freely admitted that *The Saturday Review* of 1856 and the succeeding years revived the dormant science of criticism, and dealt a heavy blow to the crass sciolism which then as always infests the London press. That it fell foul of Charles Reade is hardly to the credit of its prescience, yet even in its censure it could not without awkwardness conceal an undercurrent of compulsory admiration.

The following are excerpts from its prolonged half-complimentary snarl: “The plot is full of obvious faults, and the language is disfigured with affectation. It is in every way an uncommon book, uncommon in the power it displays, and the variety of knowledge it contains—uncommon in the beauty and force of its language, when the

author forgets to be affected, uncommon in the interest it excites and sustains. The plot, as we have said, is faulty. 'It is Never Too Late to Mend' contains in fact three stories; not separated in form, but really quite distinct, and hung together by a very slender thread. The first is a tale of bucolic love; the second is the history of a badly managed jail; the third relates the adventures of two Australian gold diggers. Each has great merits in itself, but the three do not combine to make a whole. . . . Every chapter throughout the work is so written that we cannot stop when we have once begun it. . . . Mr. Reade makes his miners talk as miners would talk, not like gentlemen and poets in shooting-jackets. This seems to be the great gift which Mr. Reade enjoys—he can describe. If he paints a country girl, she is like one, not like a marchioness with the hat and crook of a shepherdess. His magistrates, navvies, and thieves move, talk, and behave as we know they ought to. Of imagination in the sense of creation (*sic*) there is not in this book any great trace, . . . but it *is not once in a year*—or once in five years—that we have a fiction given us so wide in its range, so true to life as this, or containing a character so beautiful as that of Susan Merton."

"Not guilty, but he mustn't do it again;" or, perhaps, rather, "guilty, yet he may do it again," such is the chameleon criticism of this *Saturday Reviewer*. The man evidently did not know his own mind; he was writhing under a spell and struggling vainly to be free; he meant to curse, but drifted off into blessing.

The Leader, a paper of some literary pretensions, advocating Agnosticism and extreme Radicalism, follows suit, but in a different vein. "The matter-of-fact romance," it is prepared graciously to admit, "possesses many qualities

which will fix the attention of novel readers, and above all it has the quality of readableness." After which piece of platitudinous patronage, it at once darts off into spite. "Without being peculiarly fastidious," it avers, "the reader will be frequently annoyed by certain defects of matter and manner, but even the most fastidious will go through (*sic*) the three volumes, interested, sometimes excited. . . . Mr. Reade is a playwright rather than a dramatist. He shows us some of the dramatist in 'Susan' and 'George;' but the playwright predominates throughout the volumes. It is seen in the constant and irritating striving for 'effect.' He not only shows us that he is working up to a situation—a tableau on which the curtain may fall—but shows us the puerile efforts at effect in devices of printing, in tirades of rant, in foolish woodcuts meant to be impressive. He can write so simply, and writes so well when he writes simply, that his friends should warn him against unworthy imitations of the French novelists. Short chapters of a few lines, and paragraphs of a few words, or sentences in capitals, really are not effective, but only show that they were meant to be so. When he does not show us that he is trying to be effective, few writers are more so. When he is not indulging in small affectations, he writes clearly, eloquently, picturesquely. His style is graceful and strong. His power of telling a story, not descriptively but dramatically, is considerable; and he has a perception of what is healthy in human nature, especially in women. With these qualities we ought to see him produce a novel that would not simply please the unfastidious. 'It is Never Too Late to Mend' is such a novel, though not taking a high rank in its class. *No one will reread it!* The author has bestowed great pains upon it, but he has been less careful with his characters than with his details, and more solicitous of ef-

fects than of effect. What are the qualities which made the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' 'Tom Jones,' 'Pride and Prejudice,' 'Ivanhoe,' 'The Scarlet Letter,' works so rereadable? Not their incidents. Not their 'effects;' but the quiet, stealthy grasp of the imagination and the affections."

The meaning of this farrago seems to be (1) that Goldsmith despised situation, not to say plot. That allegation, *teste* the Lyceum Theatre, is untrue.

(2) That 'Tom Jones' by its stealthy grasp of the affections, beats Charles Reade's *chef d'œuvre*. To which we may reply that the pictures of some among the human affections in the said 'Tom Jones' resemble those of the canine species.

(3) That 'Ivanhoe' and the 'Scarlet Letter' are undramatic. This again is false, albeit both are less dramatic than the work which Charles Reade always terms in his MS. '*Sera nunquam*,' his late, but not too late, masterpiece.

(4) That 'Pride and Prejudice' being the very opposite of all Charles Reade's work, is on that account superior. Well, some people like brandy; some weak tea; but it won't do to argue that weak tea is stronger than brandy.

The rest of the reviews took up the same style of parable, evidently in indecision whether to heave "'arf a brick" at the venturesome author who had broken new ground, or to anticipate the public enthusiasm. In the United States, criticism, as a science, was in its infancy; and most of the leading journals contented themselves with an exhaustive analysis of the plot, one among the number, *The Boston Daily Evening Traveller*, devoting no less than three columns of close print to this achievement. Had the voice of the press, whether cis-Atlantic or trans-Atlantic prevailed, no doubt the book would have fallen stillborn.

It happens, however, that the *ultima ratio* does not lie with quill drivers, whether of the highest culture, such as those on *The Saturday Review*, or of the shoddiest mediocrity, the briefless barrister and the shorthand writer. Beyond these feeble voices is the great public, for whom alone Charles Reade wrote, and this supreme critic returned no qualified verdict. *Malgré* the prophets, 'It is Never Too Late to Mend' was not only read, but reread, and not only reread, but also read perennially. The book was triumphant.

They were right in their supposition, that this work had caused its author the severest labor. Later on, a critic described it as in places "verging on the confines of farce." Yet every detail was verified. Every fact was obtained by research and observation. The idle allegation of carelessness hurled at the most careful of writers was wholly unjustifiable, for in truth the book represents more than four years' toil, and its literary quality is beaten out by no common hand on no common anvil. As an indication of the painstaking energy, we might almost write agony, of its creator, we may fairly quote an extract from a brief and hurried letter scribbled from the Garrick Club to Mrs. Seymour, who then chanced to be on a visit to her brother-in-law, Mr. Gibson, a Scotch clergyman in Selkirkshire. The book was only in progress, that is to say portions of each volume were outlined, but the whole was unconnected. "My first volume," he writes, "will, I hope, take me up to the death of Josephs. By which means in the second I shall quite clear the Prison, and cut well into the other interest. I think it will be a great work, much *abused*, no doubt—but, a reputation. If it is so, remember, I never should have effected so great a work without you. The part with which I hope to please as well as dazzle was all written in your presence, every word of it.

“My mother is delighted with Mr. Eden ; but I am sorry to say she likes the Jew too. So that throws a doubt upon her judgment.”

So far as Mrs. Seymour is concerned, this was by no means the language of compliment. She was his literary and dramatic partner, and with her he discussed his plots, situations, and characters. To her criticism he submitted his dialogue. She possessed the faculty of perceiving at a glance how the lines would play and how each chapter would read. To term her part-author would be to exaggerate ; to underrate the aid she afforded would be an injustice. Those who knew him best would be the first to bear testimony to the invaluable services rendered throughout his career by this clever, if not very highly cultured, woman.

The following, also to Mrs. Seymour, who apparently was about to return from her long sojourn in Scotland to their joint habitation in Bolton Row, seems to show that, after all, and in spite of his prophecy that ‘It is Never Too Late to Mend’ would constitute the basis of his reputation, he hardly dared expect a second edition. No author ever felt so acutely the lash of criticism. A syllable of detraction in his eyes covered fatally a multitude of laudations, and as the censors had elected to be censorious, his hopes were rudely dashed, and barely able to revive.

“I am hard at work,” he says, “punctually and steadily. I really believe he (Bentley) is going into a Second Edition next week. Criticisms in *The Critic* and *The Spectator*, the former very warm, especially in praise of the Prison business; the latter also warm on that point, but disgusted with Meadows and Levi. So that if I listened to my critics, there is nothing somebody or other would not cut out, and if I listened again, there is nothing I should not restore.

"There is an old Greek story of a painter who exposed his picture in the market-place for criticism. 'Here is a bit of black chalk,' said he, 'mark the faults.' The multitude of critics marked out every square inch of the picture. He washed off the marks. 'Now mark the beauties,' said he. The critics marked every square inch of the picture.

"I never realized the wisdom of this story until now.

"I have just sent Webster a note consenting to treat on his terms, for that drama you know.

"Also to Bentley, offering to purchase the copies of 'Woffington' that remain on hand. So you see I have some faith in my ultimate success; all depends on this: (1) Whether I can give up eating too much; (2) whether I can have one cheerful sympathizing soul to bear me up.

"I killed Carlo to-day and wept sore, snivelling, but not saving his life any more for that. Snivelling over him and killing him, syllable by syllable. Pah! isn't it sickening?

"A Brewer is High Sheriff for our county. Yesterday he gave a dinner to the magistrates, my brother among the rest—cost £600. There was a sugar-ship, six foot high, full rigged, with guns!"

It is superfluous to add that his hesitating prognostication of a second edition was verified. It would be gratifying to know how many editions both in England and America succeeded it. A bookseller at Clifton, three years later, informed the writer of these lines that he sold more copies of "It is Never Too Late to Mend" than of "Uncle Tom's Cabin;" probably the number of readers could only be reckoned by the million.

In the following January an Irish lady wrote a string of inquiries which Charles Reade answered as follows:

"6 BOLTON ROW, MAYFAIR, Jan. 7, 1857.

"MADAM,—The details in question *are* founded on fact.

"Of course I have invented many things, but not a single horror.

"The Christiau clergyman is a pure fiction; there was no such creature in that place, but Mr. Hawes is a living man. He has murdered his fellow-creature exactly as I have described, has suffered three months' imprisonment in a debtor's prison, and is now abroad, angry with the Government, thoroughly self-satisfied and un-hung, though not, I flatter myself, ungibbeted.

"Those black facts have been before the public before ever I handled them; they have been told, and tolerably well told, by many chroniclers. But it is my business, and my art, and my duty, to make you ladies and gentlemen *realize* things, which the chronicler presents to you in his dim, and cold, and shadowy way; and so they pass over your mind like idle wind.

"This you sometimes call 'being harrowed,' but ask yourselves two questions:

"(1) Do you think you are harrowed one tenth part as much as I have been; as I could harrow you?

"(2) I, one tenth part as much as Josephs, who died under the harrow?

"I have answered your questions broadly. I will do better; I will put it in your power to test that part of my story, if you think it worth while, and it is well worth while.

"I will send you, as soon as I can lay my hand on it, a Blue Book, containing the results of a Royal Commission held upon a certain gaol three years ago. Here you will see my darker facts, and many more deposed to on oath.

"Meantime, if you or any of your friends file *The Times*, look it over from the 6th to the 16th September, 1853.

"I am glad you care whether these things are true or false.

"You have done wisely and well to come to *me* to know.

"I am obliged by your kind expressions; and the length of this letter will, I trust, show you that I am not indifferent to your good opinion. I have the honor to be,

Yours very truly,

"CHARLES READE."

It was a curious coincidence that, although the author of "It is Never Too Late to Mend" here affirms with em-

phasis that there was no Christian clergyman in the jails he investigated in search of material, one of the jail chaplains on whom he passed this censure was subsequently promoted to a living in the gift of the Crown for his humanity in assisting in the reform of a too rigorous system within the walls of the jail wherein he ministered; and that this same gentleman should have only survived Charles Reade by a few weeks. His defect apparently lay in a lack of preaching power.

CHAPTER XIX.

A VINDICATION OF SHAKESPEARE.

WE have hitherto purposely omitted to catalogue Charles Reade's minor achievements prior to the issue of "It is Never Too Late to Mend." To have dwelt on small successes and yet smaller failures would have been to distract the eye from the approaching climax. At the same time, it may be only a fitting tribute to his muse to mention some among his ephemeral works.

"Masks and Faces" placed his name forever among English dramatists. Played first in 1852, it was succeeded in the same year by a piece called "The Village Tale" at the Strand Theatre. The year following witnessed the production of "Gold," a drama in five acts, at Drury Lane. This was the precursor of his yet grander drama of many years later, and the basis of the third volume of "It is Never Too Late to Mend." It may be fairly termed a moderate success, since it saved Mr. Smith, the lessee of Drury Lane. That gentleman was so hopelessly involved that he contemplated a bolt to America—or anywhere—immediately upon the failure of Charles Reade's drama. After the first night he prevailed upon himself to try the result of the opening week; and, after that period had elapsed, began to feed the vultures out of his author's brains. He had bargained to give £20 a week and a box. This he adhered to, albeit he was a very Ethelred in his payments. "Gold" not only cleared him of the birds of

prey, but left him with a round sum in his pocket. Yet the critics subsequently reviled the play as a failure!

In 1854 he collaborated with Tom Taylor in "Two Loves and a Life," and also in "The King's Rival," which was produced successfully at the Princess' Theatre; while there emanated from his single pen in 1855 a comedietta, styled "Nobs and Snobs," written for the St. James' Theatre; and in the same year he adapted from the French "The Courier of Lyons," and collaborated with Tom Taylor in "The First Printer," which was played at the Princess' Theatre.

1856 was consecrated to his great novel, and after that for eight years he ceased to write for the stage.

"It is Never Too Late to Mend" seems to have exhausted his energies, so much so that men were found to prophesy that he would prove a one-book author. He wrote, it is true, but with a pen that had for the nonce lost some of its vigor and its charm. "The Course of True Love Never did Run Smooth" was indeed a falling-off after his glorious "*Sera Nunquam*;" while "Cream," issued from the press in 1858, seemed like a determined effort to wreck an established reputation. "White Lies," we grant, contained much of his former literary quality. He wrote it to order for the *London Journal*, and, as was said with veracious acerbity at the time, tried to descend to the level of a servant girl and shopboy circulation. He nevertheless contrived so to charm the readers of the *London Journal* that the circulation of that popular weekly quadrupled, and when the book was published at his own risk for the libraries, though he had reason enough to complain that the critics were no friends of his, it proved a startling financial success. Certain wiseacres discovered that the story was a plagiarism from the French, and then pro-

ceeded to slaughter the author on that hypothesis. They were wrong in their premises, if not in their conclusion, but as usual had not the honesty to confess their error. Others derided the lack of incident and the Gallicism of a drama novel whose scene is laid in France and whose characters, being French, ought, one would suppose, to utter with French epigram, emotion, and vivacity. The author deliberately painted a French book with French coloring. But this was too much for the British critic to comprehend. He railed because the French characters did not talk conventional English, and the reading public seems to have believed what the critics averred. In fact the book was considered to be a failure, yet it boasts readers to this day, its best justification.

“Love me Little, Love me Long,” which followed “White Lies,” has found admirers, but not by the shoal; while the “Autobiography of a Thief,” with “Jack of all Trades,” disappointed those myriads on either side of the ocean who were expecting eagerly another work worthy a grand mind.

It was in 1858 that *Fraser* published a sensational paper on Shakspeare. To this Charles Reade wrote a rejoinder. Whether the paper in question was offered to some one of the magazines cannot be determined. It may have been rejected by the editor of *Fraser* himself, for aught we know, rejoinders not being always acceptable to editorial *amour propre*. Anyhow, it never has seen the light, and we are glad to be able to lay it before the public as evidencing in a marked degree his reverence for the Bard of Avon, and also his exalted ideal of dramatic excellence. It displays his own estimate of the functions of the dramatist, no less than of the intrinsic dignity of the drama. Those who are careless of the reputation of a noble art

may not unprofitably peruse the lofty sentiments of one who begged that on his tomb, before aught else, should be graven the title "Dramatist."

The essay is termed

"SHAKESPEARE AND THE STAGE,

"A CRITICISM OF A CRITICISM.

"The *Fraser's Magazine* for last month has a smart article on 'Poets and Players.'

"The writer is happily unembarrassed with those doubts that beset the heavy armed soldier of letters, who thinks twice before he decides, as far as in him lies, subjects wide and deep.

"We go with him in his rebellion against that domineering phrase 'legitimate drama.'

"The moment words, the conventional not actual signs of things, waver in meaning, falsehood can do anything with them; truth nothing but cut them out of her vocabulary: and legitimate drama has been convicted before a committee of the House of Commons of meaning so many different things as to stand for nothing.

"We should be sorry to throw a universal slur on this article of *Fraser's*; for there are sprightly, intelligent sentences in it; but men must stand or fall by their sums total.

"Truths pressed into the service of error lose their character; and we have truths here that could prove their alibi in any court of reason. We have not time to laugh at what we have paid that justice to before, but the following conclusions are, we think, the writer's private property; there is no reason why they should not remain so.

"1. 'Shakespeare's plays are not good acting plays for our day.'

"The only argument he gives us for this monstrous little proposition is an intelligent conjecture that comes two hundred years too late.

"This is the point of it: that since we see the best acting plays are those written for certain actors, a certain time, etc., it is not *likely* a play written for Shakespeare's company, age, and audience should make a good acting play for the actors, stage, etc., of the middle of the nineteenth century: in other words, it is *unlikely* that Shakespeare should be a wonderful (or unlikely) man; it is *unlikely* that this actor writing female parts for 'little scrubby boys' to play really gave them Portia, Rosalind, and Lady Macbeth, which they could not play; it is almost equally *unlikely* that a writer in *Fraser* should forget Shakespeare was acted from 1790 to 1820, with ten times the effect he ever produced in his own day; and that generally, though he hit his own times, he has hit other ages harder.

"Yet the dramatic success of Shakespeare in ages not his own is no less a fact than this weak surmise of *Fraser's* is a fact—and the difference between *likely* facts and *unlikely* ones is only this: the latter are to be the more cherished, for they have the greater value. *It is by them alone we are to correct our huge mass of erroneous expectations*; and to do this is the intellectual business of a sane man's life.

"Shakespeare's contemporaries were great upon the stage: but Shakespeare is great in separating himself from their fate; he has distanced the bounds of their undoubted genius.

"Jonson is no more. Beaumont and Fletcher hold the stage now by one claw out of fifty-one, 'The Maids' Tragedy.' Philip Massinger lives on the stage by 'A New

Way to Pay Old Debts;' Otway by his 'Venice Preserved.'

"The evidence that proves these their only good acting plays for other ages than their own, proves far more in favor of 'Macbeth,' 'Othello,' 'Lear,' and divers other Shakespearian plays, which draw greater houses than these, the sole permanent hits of men greater in dramatic power than any Englishman of this day.

"It is an error in comparing the *inherent scenic attraction* of an old play with a new one to forget that merit is one thing, novelty another.

"A play is but an incarnate story, and an old story well told must yield to each new story indifferently told, though it shall in time survive each. Supposing it true that all novels compared with Scott's, and all acted plays compared with Shakespeare's, are as smoke to fire, we should yet read weak new novels, and flock to feeble plays. Only we should not return to these vomits as we do.

"The Irelands palmed on a class, which our writer thinks Shakespeare's best critics, viz., upon literary critics, a manuscript play by Shakespeare; it was read, discussed: an antiquarian or so said No! most of the critics said Yes! and one of no mean fame, Dr. Parr, fell on his knees before the manuscript. It was put on the stage: coal-heavers and prentices set literary criticisms right in ten minutes. Why? The stuffed fish thrown down on a bank might pass for a live fish, but put it in the water. No!

"*The stage is Shakespeare's home*; he had taught these unlearned persons, prentices, and public what to expect in a great acting play.

"Ireland's work mimicked his language and deceived the predecessors of this gentleman, with names as great as his own; but when it ventured into Shakespeare's magic

circle the false spirit evaporated. We will now tell this writer, the Irelands, and their conceited dupes, and all cliques, past, present, and to come, what would happen were a great play, brother to 'Macbeth' and 'Othello,' the *soi-disants*, bad acting plays of Shakespeare, to be really disinterred. So long as it was only printed and read there would be differences of opinion: all the literary critics would be more or less disgusted with its faults as a literary composition. We should come to the spire with our two-foot rules, and should talk of the 'evident traces of genius,' and the 'frigid conceits,' and mere bombast with which here and there the 'writer's most successful efforts are marred,' etc., etc.—all of which would be *perfectly true*—in the closet.

"It would then pass through the stage door, and come a new thing into fair competition with Sir E. Bulwer and others, who write what *Fraser* justly calls good acting plays; it would not defeat these writers: *it would annihilate them.*

"The lawyer would leave his quibbles; the philosopher, if there is one, his speculations; the divine his commentaries; the sot his cups; the actors of other theatres their deserted stages; the great the Swedish thrush, to hear the true nightingale sing at home.

"For years and years and years the theatre that held it would be crammed to the ceiling with this single attraction.

"The manager would make a fortune, and running sly would sell to some bolder speculator, who would make a fortune after him, to his disgust; and at last a miracle would top all these marvels, a reviewer who has seen in a vision, not in a theatre, that there are as good acting plays in this planet as Shakespeare's would see himself in the

wrong, and would find that Shakespeare, actor and poet, knows the business side of his business better than we critics have as yet known any part of a part of ours.

"2. Our writer 'cannot think that Shakespeare, were he flourishing now, would write for the stage.'

"This surmise springs from an idea that the stage has fixed intellectual limits, and a witling of *Fraser* has discovered what they are. But it is not so: the stage is no more answerable for the bulk of its present faults than paper and ink are answerable for bad books, and clever monthly or quarterly twaddle.

"The stage was what man made it, is what man makes it, and shall be what man shall make it. Shakespeare *re-divivus* would write for the stage now, as then; but now, as then, he would find it one thing and leave it another. He would write it up to him, not himself down to it.

"The German critic who thinks Shakespeare was not specially a *dramatic poet* has not read the man's works.

"Shakespeare tried the other experiment in an octavo volume of undramatic poems, larger than the volumes with which great poetic reputations have been made and ought to be made.

"But those dreamy dunces bring simple ignorance or simple conjecture against fact!

"Macaulay has beaten Shakespeare's head off at Roman stories in verse; but who, novelty apart, can try a fall with him at home, *i. e.*, upon the stage. If Moses was the law-giver, Shakespeare is the dramatist of dramatists.

"3. 'The true reason why rank, intelligence, and education do not go to see Shakespeare acted, is that they stay at home and read him.'

"This is matter of opinion; we are inclined neither to abuse the better class for not flocking to see an old play,

nor to give them all this credit. From seven till ten at night is the theatrical period which happens not to be the intellectual hour of society; on uncommon occasions the higher classes are diverted from Shakespeare by music and novelties, and in a general way by thin soup, strong port, and weak chat; by a natural preference for the society of living mortals over a dead immortal on boards or paper. That Shakespeare is read in proportion to his literary merits is a day-dream.

“The nation is full of thumbed Tennysons, but its Shakespeares are beautifully clean. I never caught but two men reading this poet, and never a single woman in our whole mortal career. We allow the editions: people do buy Shakespeare, do shelf him, or ship him for the colonies; they do more, they mean to read him, profess to have read him; they look at his well-bound back, and honestly think they must somehow have read him, but read him they do not: we grant that ‘his words of wisdom have become part of our common knowledge.’ But this does not advance the closet one inch against the stage unless it can be proved that these words of wisdom have not been caught from actors’ mouths; it would be easier to prove the contrary.

“What are the quotations in common use? Those coming from the plays oftenest acted; ay, and from the stage copies too.

“At this moment, three literary men out of four think ‘Richard’s himself again’ is a Shakespearian line. Why? Because it is uttered on the stage for Shakespeare; and literature, like the public, takes what little it knows from the stage.

“Among the phenomena of letters is this: no old lady of either sex can write a novel without quoting ‘to be or

not to be;' which words he, she, and it understand to mean 'to take place, or not to take place,' *vide* every bad novel writer.

"Whence this universal misrepresentation of a writer? From the stage. These words have always been so weakly pronounced on the stage that, separated from their context, they lead the non-reader of Shakespeare wrong.

"The words of course mean 'to exist or not to exist': the latter proposition ought to be marked as strongly as the first—that is to say, without robbing the 'not' of its stress; the second 'to be' ought to be marked as strongly as the first 'to be'; so spoken they could not be misunderstood when separated from the context.

"But they are not so spoken because actors are asses. To him who reads the soliloquy the blunder is hardly possible; why then, out of so many who quote it, do all misunderstand it! Because Literature takes its Shakespeare from the stage!

"4 'Shakespeare is not of an age, but for all time, whence it follows by a legitimate corollary that neither is he of a stage, but for all climes.' When time and place become identical this may be Ratiocination; it is to say that duration implies change of locality. 'The Thames will flow on forever; *ergo*, some day it must change its bed.'

"We are ready to admit that the dialogue outside Portia's house (Lorenzo and Jessica) is defiled at present upon the stage; two creatures bawling. Moonlight, music, and silence make us sigh for the closet and the speaking book; and other poetic passages have often been soiled in the vulgar hands through which the stage in its present state passes them—indeed, if the scale was the balance, these passages would do wonders for this antiscenic theory.

But our scale is not a balance, and for every such passage there are ten in which the text can give the reader but a shadow of the actor poet. On this point surely he alone is safe evidence who reads the volumes by their own bare light. In *our minds* what we have seen, and what we read, have long ago been inextricably commingled. But eminent scholars who have just studied Shakespeare's text, and afterwards seen him even indifferently acted, have confessed they learned more of the man by one such representation than by many perusals, and this evidence is of an impregnable nature.

"The reviewer, in estimating the force of Shakespeare on the public when heard and seen, or read silently, is out of his depth; he fancies, as a child or Dogberry might, that written language is a galvanic telegraph from mind to minds, and nothing lost in transitu. Alas! this is the brightest but falsest of all his dreams; letters are a clever invention, but not so clever as that. Could a living poet look into the souls of his readers he would see but a sketch of the thoughts his words present to himself; but if that poet had his tongue under command he could, by speaking his lines, lay something of his colors on that sketch. Spoken words are signs of thought; written words are signs of such signs. Could we evoke Shakespeare and persuade him to speak his greatest lines, would this lad pat him on the back and say, 'you are spoiling the author, my good sir; write it down, you never meant it to be spoken'? No! His prejudice would be cowed by other prejudices, and he would relish these living words more than their black shadows on paper.

"Yet this Shakespeare found in his day actors who, though since eclipsed, could speak his greatest lines up to his intention and more to his mind than he could himself;

this is proved by his taking the second-rate parts in his own plays.—N.B. The only manager in creation that ever did this or ever will. *Que voulez-vous?*—He was Shakespeare in this too; *Fraser's* decision against the Macbeth and Hamlet of actors is therefore resolvable into *Fraser versus Shakespeare*.

“Comparison of subjects ends the moment the adjective ‘bad’ is covertly introduced inside a substantive; bad speaking misleads the weak mind as to the nature of speech; bad acting misleads the muddle-head about the meaning of the word acting.

“The real condition of words is this: written words are the fair, undisfigured corpses of spoken words. A vulgar actor, or any bad speaker, mutilates these corpses more or less; but an artist of the tongue, like Macready, Rachel, or Stirling, restores to those corpses the soul and sunlight they had when in the author’s brain and breast.

“Since a comparative slur has been thrown on Mr. Macready’s ‘Macbeth,’ we will join an issue on that ground.

“Let literary critics inspect these lines—

‘Better be with the dead,
Whom we to gain our place have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave.
After Life’s fitful fever he sleeps well.
Treason has done its worst: nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch him further’—

and afterwards hear Macready speak them. If they have not, as many of our literary friends have, ears too deaf and uncultivated to judge the triumphs of speech, they will acknowledge they could never have gathered for them-

selves all the heavenly, glowing beauty this artist restores to the stumbling letter of the text.

"No private reader could ever see these words as Glover used to fire them:

"'Will Sir John take Fanny without a fortune? NO! After you have settled the largest part of your property on your youngest daughter, can there be an equal portion left the elder? NO! Doesn't this overturn the whole system of the family? YES!' And this force is not superadded, as our critic might think; it comes in most cases by oral descent from the author.

"What mere reader would see the full value of the '*Zaire, vous pleurez*' of Voltaire? The author did. Actors have succeeded to his mind as well as syllables, and it is only by the stage these words are still Voltaire and more than his shadow.

"The reader of Otway comes to these words, 'Remember Twelve.' He sees nothing in them and passes on. For years these words were never spoken on the stage without a round of applause.

"'*Il se souvient,*' says Rachel, in '*Le Vieux de la Montagne.*' A murmur of admiration bursts from the cold but intelligent Theatre Français; what are those words to any mere reader?

"Read the little modern play called 'Time Tries All'; you are untouched by the letters of which it is composed, yet when Stirling gives the author to the public, bearded men are seen crying, and so it is more or less in all plays; less so in Shakespeare's or Sheridan's than in unreadable plays, but the distinction is one of degree, not kind. Shakespeare's gain as much in themselves, as the diamond, by being shaped and polished. The dumb-play, that great pictorial narrative, is the ground-work of all human plays; the words are but the flowers.

“Whoever can measure human talent has observed that a novel equal to or a little inferior to a given play is thrice as attractive to read; and why? Because the novelist paints the dumb-play of his characters, and with his best colors too; the dramatist is obliged to leave this to the stage and the stage does it. Such, then, is the double force of speaking looks, and burning-words, that it is impossible any play can be in the closet what it can be on the stage if well acted. It was always the fate of the stage to be most talked of by those who know least about it. The stage is the unique repository of oral traditions in lettered nations.

“The melodies Ophelia sings, and her pretty ballad twang, have come from mouth to mouth since Shakespeare’s time, engraved on the boards, not printed in the volumes. The business of the stage, the positions of the personages, are in many cases Shakespeare’s; and it is not to be doubted by those who know the stage that hundreds and thousands of Shakespeare’s own tones and inflections live on the stage and by the stage; to perish with the stage, the towns, the palaces, the temples, and the globe.

“Non omnia possumus omnes.

“The man of letters, unless keenly on his guard, is apt, by his fixed mode of acquiring knowledge, to be diverted from that fine cultivation of the ear and eye which qualifies a man to say these words to the public about Kean or Macready, in connection with Shakespeare. This is excusable; but a lettered nation, if wise, will fight against those weaknesses that accompany its strength. For the senses, like the stage, are what man chooses to make them. They are avenues by which, if well kept, Wisdom and Beauty have access to the soul. They can also be left

fallow, blunted, perverted, or degraded. Wherefore the stage is of service to man by preserving the great sense of hearing from slowness, rusticity, and degradation; and the great and Godlike art of speech from being lost! Ay! from being lost!

“They have heard to little purpose who have not discovered how much mouthing and very little correct speaking there is in churches, courts of law, parliament, and society. *Great speaking there is none!* except on the stage, where there is so devilish little. This need not be so, must not be so, will not be so, shall not be so! But so long as it is so, let us work from the centre which does exist, and create a circumference.

“Let us foster the unique germ of this great art. Let the stage be chastised, not stabbed; lashed, not barbarously tomahawked; let the average manager cease to carry his want of morals to stupidity and his want of intellect to a crime; let the average actor, that strange, mad lump of conceit, ignorance, and stale tricks, be compelled to learn something (at present he is the one spectator who learns nothing) from those true artists of the tongue, the face, and the person who now place art in vain by the side of his threadbare artifice: who portray the emotions with various and true looks, and whose golden lips shoot great words to the ear, burning and breathing a beauty, a glory, a music, and a life that those words can never carry to the soul through the cold and uncertain medium of the eye.”

CHAPTER XX.

VISITS TO ADDINGTON AND KNEBWORTH.

AMONG Mrs. Reade's prelatical friends none was more staunch than John Bird Sumner, successively Bishop of Chester and Archbishop of Canterbury. To the last he corresponded with her, and was keenly appreciative of her society. Perhaps it may be superfluous to add that they were both of the same way of thinking, evangelical to the core.

In his earlier days this good churchman and charming gentleman had been a constant visitor at Ipsden; and among Mrs. Reade's children, if we except her daughter Julia, none attracted him more than Charles. Had the son been infected with his mother's ardent religious zeal, and embraced the clerical profession, Dr. Sumner would have spared no efforts to push him to the fore. His bias, as we know, lay in a different direction, but the archbishop had a long memory for the young man in whom formerly he had felt so warm an interest. No sooner had his reputation been firmly established by the triumph of "It is Never Too Late to Mend," than the archbishop hastened to offer him the hospitality of Addington.

It might be presupposed that Charles Reade, of all men, would be the last to endure social penance under an archiepiscopal roof. That, however, would be to do him injustice. The son of the most courtly of gentlemen, he had inherited the very type of manner to charm Dr.

Sumner. He knew beforehand that he would be not merely a welcome, but an appreciated guest; nor was he, like many dwellers in the land of Bohemia, so wretchedly narrow-minded as to despise scholarship and learning. Over and over again he was heard throughout his career to employ the same formula, "I like so-and-so. At all events he is a gentleman," the inference being that it was his hard fate to rub shoulders with very many bipeds of the male variety who were much the reverse. Besides, in the case of Dr. Sumner he had to encounter a dignitary as keenly capable of relishing a dramatic situation or an epigrammatic dialogue as his worthy uncle, Mr. Faber, who on one occasion strove, though the Fates happened to be against it, to bring him in contact with his warm friend, the poet Southey.

He accepted the kindly archbishop's invitation, and this is how he describes his sensation :

"ADDINGTON PARK, CROYDON, *Tuesday*.

"I got here safe, and was ushered into a nice large bedroom with a blazing fire of wood and coal.

"Quite a small party to dinner; in fact, one stranger only, a parson, a chatty personage enough. One of the daughters, I find, composes songs and sells them on half-profits. Some talk with her about that.

"Bob Sumner, the son, a mighty chatty young gentleman, caught me going to bed, and offered me a cigar on the sly in his bedroom, said room being about the size of our premises; and having ascertained by its permanent odor that his baccy was good, I proposed that he should play a solo on that instrument, and that I should be *Nositor*.

"Eyes sparkled in the usual way at so beneficent a proposition, and we sat up talking. It is twelve o'clock (A.M.), and I have seen nothing of my lord yet, so I doubt he is taking a rest after his solo.

"My bed was delicious, so delicious that I have examined its construction. The foundation is one of those springy, French affairs; then, next to the body, a single mattress—a wool mattress, I think, but a *foot* thick!

"I woke at eight, quite refreshed. It is a beautiful day, and I hear some talk of walking out. That will bore me considerably.

"The dear old Archbishop is the same as ever: kind, gentle, and unassuming. I observed that a tendency I saw in him last time, to go to sleep without warning, and wake again, and join in the conversation as if he had never been away from it, has somewhat developed itself."

This may be taken as a singularly faithful picture of a venerable prelate, who was advanced to the chair of A Becket and Lanfranc, not so much because of prominent force of character, as on account of his sterling worth. Dr. Sumner became Archbishop of Canterbury, in consequence of being personally popular with everybody who was anybody. He was a scholar and a gentleman; and adorned his exalted office.

Another visit about this period was infinitely more congenial to the rising author.

It has been previously stated that among the numerous clergy who from time to time accepted the hospitality of Ipsden, Charles Pearson attracted the subject of this memoir most. He had become, by favor of Lord Lytton, Rector of Knebworth, and was desirous of bringing together the junior and veteran novelist. As the event proved, the associations of Knebworth Rectory and Park were so agreeable as to have induced Charles Reade to prolong his sojourn in Hertfordshire.

His first letter from Knebworth is to Mrs. Seymour, who was sojourning with her sister, the wife of the Selkirkshire minister, Mr. Gibson.

"KNEBWORTH RECTORY, STEVENAGE.

"Here am I, but, alas, *sans* nail-brush, *sans* tooth-brush, *sans* soda, *sans* everything.

"At dinner yesterday, Bulwer, Sir W., and Lady Boothby, and a jolly plump woman, a Mrs. B——, a handsome face and lively. She wore a wreath of artificial leaves, and diamonds in profusion, set on light sprigs; they shook like aspen leaves at every move, and I expected to see one flirt out and glitter on the ground. It is not usual to wear £500 worth of dia-

monds at a small dinner-party with the parson of the parish. But never mind, Sir W. Boothby was six feet five, and quite as stout in proportion. Bulwer is wonderfully like Mephistopheles, as drawn by German artists.

"I got a splendid idea from him indirectly. I heard him telling Lady B—— that he had *photographs of maniacs* in different postures. Lady B——, who is one of those sweet, smiling dolts, only stared, and *told*, as soon as he was gone.

"A knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear."

"Mrs. Pearson's remark: 'Poor man! his head is full of his *wife*.'"

"This is the gossip of the Rectory. Oh! stop! A trait of the hostess: Dislikes 'Adam Bede.' Saw at once it was by a woman, and a coarse-minded one. Calls it 'an immoral book, very unfit for young men. Young ladies may read it—it won't do them any harm, because they won't understand it.'"

"Here's paradox for you!"

He writes further:

"I think the enclosed will give you as much pleasure just now as anything I could tell you. And please put it carefully away inside my desk in the blue room. It is sincere; or he would not want me to go in for the 'Christmas Tale.'"

"We may also hope by this that the tale will not flag, for mind, D—— has been reading a long way in advance of the public.

"To-day Mr. Owen Meredith, son of Sir E. Bulwer, called in a brown velvet coat and waistcoat, salmon-colored shirt, and lilac tie. Very agreeable and funny.

"He writes poetry, you know, and very well.

"That man P—— who intruded on me, pretending to know Bulwer, has intruded on Bulwer pretending to know me, and has nearly poisoned him. I wish I could get Bulwer and the Minister acquainted. He would really do him some good.

"On Monday I return, but I don't as yet know by what train. No. of *All the Year Round* duly received. Kind regards to Gibson."

To Mrs. Seymour he writes again:

"KNEBWORTH RECTORY, STEVENAGE, HERTS.

"They insist on my staying till Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning. I yield.

"So please send me my letters till Tuesday; I have got a little triumph for you.

"*The Times* came to-day with only half the supplement. I asked Pearson the reason, and he said, 'Oh, that was all that could go by post under the stamp.'

"So it seems a stamped copy is really weighed by the news agents, and the copies are prepared for posting accordingly.

"The copies go on the railway by parcel, and are therefore always complete when you buy at a station.

"I have been to see the monument of the Reades at Hatfield Church. I am told nothing is left of old Brocket Hall. I have found out how it passed away.

"Sir James Reade, who died in 1711, had no son, but only three daughters; these would be co-heiresses, and sell, like idiots, and divide the money, instead of one taking the estate and mortgaging it to two thirds for the others. And so we lost Brocket Hall, as we got it—*by the petticoats!* Mr. Pearson says it is a noble park, but the house is new. I have no doubt the Melbournes pulled down some fine old Tudor place, and built a barrack instead."

This letter simply bristles with errors. The last Reade who held and resided at Brocket was a spinster. Three of her sisters were married: one to Mr. Secretary Warrington, the next to Sir H. Dashwood of Kirtlington, the third to Mr. Myddleton of Chirk Castle. Their brother, the last baronet of the Brocket line, died in Rome—as the monument says "while on his travels," but really in the suite of the king over the water. On his death Edward Reade of Ipsden, nephew of the first baronet, and on failure of male issue heir of entail, claimed his estate. He employed a lawyer in Wallingford to prosecute his claim, and the man was incompetent.

The sisters and co-heiresses of the deceased baronet were wealthy and in possession; they asserted that before their brother left England he had taken effectual measures to bar the entail. Edward Reade was very old and too

poor to engage in a costly lawsuit, and so might prevailed over right. On the death of Miss Reade in 1760, this fine demesne was sold, and twenty years afterwards passed into the hands of Mr. Lamb, grandfather of the late Lord Melbourne, and of his sister Lady Palmerston, and is now possessed by her grandson, Earl Cowper.

The following is to Mrs. Reade:

"KNEBWORTH, *Wednesday.*

"DEAR MOTHER,—I dined with Sir E. Bulwer and passed a pleasant, instructive evening.

"We drew from him a review of the great parliamentary leaders and speakers of his day, and some traditions of the last generation of speakers.

"He depicted their characters, intellectual and moral, very finely and very fairly. He insists that Palmerston and his contemporaries are vastly inferior to the rising men.

"It may interest you to know whom he calls the five great orators of the Lower House: Gladstone, Bright, Whiteside, Cairns, D'Israeli, super-eminent in irony, personality of every sort, and dramatic talent, but prolix, and inferior in dealing with general subjects. I wish you could have heard him, for you take more interest in politics than I do.

"Yours affectionately,

CHARLES."

This is to Mrs. Seymour, who had returned to London:

"I shall come home Thursday, as I said, *malgré* an invitation to dinner from Sir E. L. for that day. He asked me what was my interest in defending French copyrights? They are all alike. Incapable of public feeling, unable to imagine its existence within a human breast.

"He is comic beyond the power of the pen to describe. Goes off mentally into the House of Commons, and harangues by the yard with an arm stretched out straight as a line. Puts on an artificial manner—Yaw! Yaw! Yaw! and every moment exposes the artifice by exploding in a laugh which is nature itself—loud, sudden, clear, fresh, naïve, and catching as a ploughboy's.

"These periodical returns to nature in her rudest form, from a manner which is the height of transparent artifice, are funny beyond anything the stage has hitherto given us."

"Taken in combination the last two letters are admirably descriptive of the romanticist and cynic, the genius who loved dearly veneer and prose. The concluding missive to Mrs. Seymour travels away from Knebworth to her own concerns:

"It is a wet day, and I hope to do wonders with this little farce before dinner-time. I dine with Sir E. Bulwer this evening.

"The Pearsons are most anxious I should stay with them to-morrow. I have told them it depends whether I can be in London at 10.30 on Friday, starting hence early that day.

"I do not understand whether R. has made a hit or not. I hope he has. I have not much hopes for the ballet—except Thompson they are all sloppy! sloppy!—which is the cause of failure in dancing, singing, preaching, acting, everything—and always will be!

"I cannot see the fun of executing feebly the sort of dance the public has seen done with fire and precision. That is not *Burlesque*, any more than Miss Glyn's Stewart is burlesque. If merely doing things badly was fun, how full of fun the stage and the world would be.

"One comfort is, the public is an ass. Let us hope that by deserving to fail we may succeed."

Sir Edward Lytton-Bulwer, as he was then, Lord Lytton afterwards, proved in one way a good friend to our author. He introduced to each other the two Charleses of fiction, Charles Dickens and Charles Reade. Remotely he was of the same blood as the latter, and in art the *frater frater* of each. His letter of introduction has been preserved, and runs thus:

"MY DEAR DICKENS,—Herewith let me present to you Mr. Charles Reade, whose works and pen are too well known to you to need lengthened introduction. He would like to talk to you on a favorite subject of his for improving the interest of authors.

"Yours ever, E. B. LYTTON.

"KNEBWORTH, *November 25th*, 1859."

Result. Charles Dickens clasped the other Charles by the hand, and they became forever after fast friends.

CHAPTER XXI.

COMBATIVE.

It was on the eve of the issue of "White Lies," when the public had begun to think that the author of "It is Never Too Late to Mend" was going to prove a one-book man, that he permitted his enthusiasm for justice, always a ruling passion of his, to hurry him into two acts of singularly chivalrous unwisdom.

We have seen how he strove to enlist the sympathies of Lord Lytton and Charles Dickens on behalf of the French playwrights. He had availed himself, already, of French brains—had stolen, as he would have phrased it. But a step had already been taken by our Legislature in the direction of International Copyright; and it was still open to question whether the dramatic rights of the foreigner could be, as they ought in equity to be, safeguarded.

To test this, Charles Reade went to Paris, interviewed M. Maquet, bought a play of his—"The English Right of Reproduction"—for £40, and came home to assert it. To commence operations he entered his claim at Stationer's Hall, advertised his sole proprietorship, and had not long to wait before it was challenged.

First, Mr. Sterling Coyne asked to be allowed to play his own adaptation of Maquet's piece at the Surrey Theatre. This was granted with reluctance. But no sooner had Coyne's play been advertised than, *presto*, two unheard-of authors announced another adaptation at the Strand. Mr.

George Annesley was accordingly instructed by Charles Reade to warn them against this infringement of his rights; and later, in company with an able solicitor, he called and politely stated his resolve to attack them. They saved him, however, the trouble of becoming plaintiff by commencing an action against him for slander of their title, which he had stigmatized as piracy.

He fought it out to the end, and won his case with costs; whereupon one of the dramatic anonymuncles went bankrupt with all possible celerity; and the other, after going to prison and threatening the Insolvent Court, eventually paid a fraction of his debt by instalments. In the long run, Charles Reade emerged from his litigation a loser of £210, not to mention time and temper. The latter found an easement in the publication of a record of these proceedings. The book, styled "The Eighth Commandment," is as terse, epigrammatic, and, we must add, hysterical as its subject is dreary. He published it at his own risk, per Messrs. Trübner, and probably added to the losses of the lawsuit not inconsiderably. A little more of this sort of unwisdom would have wrecked an established reputation. Mudie declined "The Eighth Commandment," and the reviews refused to regard it as serious. Its author very quickly perceived that he had perpetrated an error, and in private acknowledged it. He had been in effect piling Pelion *super* Ossa.

The Ossa to which we refer was a bit of Quixotism of a different sort. His study of criminal life, if not the natural bent of his mind, had led him to believe, there being indisputably an immense mass of injury and cruelty, injustice and oppression, in this wicked world, that it was the mission of all good and true men to battle with it. Dickens held very much the same idea; but he was prac-

tical and unenthusiastic compared with Charles Reade. The latter, in the spirit of one of his knight-errant ancestors, burned with a desire to redress wrong and punish robbery. Hence, when a tale of suffering was poured into his ears, they were only too ready to listen.

The first subject for whom he elected to break a lance was a Mr. Fletcher. Certain near relations averred that this gentleman was insane. Most assuredly, if manner be at all a test of sanity or its opposite, most casual observers would have cordially agreed with the relatives. The writer has a vivid remembrance of his prolonged agony during a breakfast to which he was invited in order to meet the said Mr. Fletcher. It may be that the gentleman's brain was abnormally excited by the conversation happening to turn on his own grievance. But *certes*, when a young man elects to brandish his knife in order to point a moral and adorn a tale, one can but argue cerebral irritation on his part—and that, too, of a rather alarming type, and wish he, or you, were somewhere else. What, however, appeared to commonplace minds to resemble, let us say, a splendid presentment of lunacy, to Charles Reade seemed only a charming and natural vivacity. It would be libellous to affirm that the gentleman was mad, nor do we hazard so much as a suggestion of derangement. The knife, however, which he employed much as the late M. Jullien his *bâton*, might have been termed a colorable pretext. His champion, nevertheless, believed in him heartily, and espoused his cause with amazing warmth. These are his reflections concerning the Fletcher episode many years after it had terminated, and he was a wiser man :

“In the intervals of writing novels and dramas,” he remarks, “I have had many lawsuits, for myself and others. My own were principally in defence of my literary prop-

erty. Of the others, one is worth mentioning. There is a commercial house of some importance, Fletcher & Company. The firm was troubled with a relative, a nephew, a young fellow who drank, had fits, wasted money, and above all, claimed £35,000 of the House as his father's representative. They put him into a madhouse. He escaped, and threw himself on my protection. I found him a solicitor, who took proceedings; and I kept the plaintiff twelve months at my own expense, and brought him up to the scratch, sober. He was examined eight hours, and his sanity so cleared that defendants succumbed and compromised the case for an annuity."

He judiciously omits to state what this little business cost him, over and above time, trouble, and ceaseless worry. Enough that he cried after it was over, "No more Law-suits! No more Eighth Commandments! No more Fletchers!"

Unfortunately he did not entirely adhere to this admirable resolution. But of that anon.

It must have been clear to him at this point in his career that he had frittered away at least three valuable years. But he was still young, fond of cricket and American bowls, with plenty of elasticity left, nor had he in the least lost faith in himself. The one thing needful appeared to be another big book—a success, which should rival, if not cap, his glorious "*Sera nunquam*." The critics had told him that there was nothing he could not do, if only he would rise to his highest level, and he had but to verify their flattering assurance. Hitherto he had placed unbounded faith in what we may term Gallicism. He was fond of asseverating that the French are the only real masters of prose in Europe, and had written very much with a French pen, though in his native tongue.

Qualified success, however, too closely akin to failure, had shaken his belief in Anglo-French dialogue, scenery, and situations. One must do in Rome as Rome does, and to please the British public a writer has to consider British sentiment. He seems, therefore, to have gathered together all the forces at his command for another supreme effort. In "It is Never Too Late to Mend" he had paralleled "Uncle Tom's Cabin." His next achievement would be in the domain of the greatest master of romance, Sir Walter Scott. The threads of the book, as yet unconceived, came to him as by inspiration, one after another. He read for it, and up to it, following his old lines, and verifying each minute detail. He labored so hard as at last to weary of the labor—it overtaxed even his Titanic industry. But he achieved in the end a grand and lasting result. He never regarded the book as his masterpiece, proving thereby that the maker is seldom the best judge of his own work. But the verdict has long since been unanimous that this same painfully evolved monument of fiction is not only his best, but, further, one of the rarest gems of English literature. A Fellow of Magdalen, with a very acute intellect of his own, on its first appearance aphorized concerning it—"There has been nothing like this since Sir Walter Scott."

And now, so far as we are able to tell the story—we might almost say the adventures—of this remarkable book:

He bargained with the proprietors of *Once a Week* to contribute a serial to their columns. It has been stated, on what seems to us authority, that after the appearance of the first few numbers of this same serial, styled "A Good Fight," *Once a Week* rose in circulation twenty thousand copies—or more, the figures having been duplicated by some of the author's more ardent admirers. Of

the accuracy of this arithmetic we cannot speak with certainty. Enough that the story fascinated its readers, but not, apparently, the editor of the magazine.

Its genesis *ab ovo* is rather obscure. Before it dazzled the public, no living being could have accredited Charles Reade with a plunge into the *moyen âge*.

"What," cried he to the writer of these lines, who during his undergraduate days had been severely bitten by the prevailing Puginism of young Oxford, "are you mediæval?" Yet, if the tone of this query were contemptuous, it is none the less a fact that he evinced a curious interest in his *vis-à-vis* on Number 2 Staircase, New Buildings, the Reverend Dr. Bloxam, who had been in his youth Cardinal Newman's curate at Littlemore, and was immersed in antiquities of all sorts, more particularly ecclesiastical. This student's rooms were overcrowded with mediæval curios, and might, at the time, have been termed one of the sights of Oxford. Moreover, Dr. Bloxam had just published the first volumes of a work involving immense research, being, in fact, a *catalogue raisonnée* of every member of Magdalen College from A.D. 1460 to A.D. 1860. It is, therefore, more than probable that the naked idea of "A Good Fight" occurred to its author's mind from observation, not unmixed with amazement, of the labors of his College friend and contemporary. Dr. Bloxam had thoroughly and successfully antedated his existence by several centuries. Charles Reade, on different lines, might do likewise.

Events favored this *beau rêve*. He lighted, in the course of his reading and researches—his eye and mind were ceaselessly burrowing wherever a book or paper presented itself—on more than one volume, which seemed to suggest an appropriate clothing for the aforesaid bare idea; above

all on a legend *Latine Redditum*, which told a drama with more than parabolic brevity, and less than human callousness. "Here," he said to himself, "is a fine field for an artist. I have but to take these dry bones with their beautiful and touching outline, breathe into them the spirit of humanity, and they will last as long as the human, or, at all events, the English, race." To do so, he had, perforce, to surmount a congenital distaste for all things mediæval, and strive to enter into the temper and tone of a remote past. That which would have been natural to a Bloxam, to him was so intensely artificial as to necessitate not merely an effort, but an abnegation of his most cherished intuitions. He did it, as he did everything when his will was concentrated upon it, with force and accuracy. He read, not only volumes, but bookshelves and libraries, with patience, if not with avidity. He achieved an act of devolution, and for the nonce became mediæval; so much so that, just as Australians still refuse to believe that the man who wrote the third volume of "It is Never Too Late to Mend" had never been in Australia—this on the evidence of Mr. Dampier, the most eminent of Antipodean actors, and himself a master of melodrama—in like manner the reader of the "*Magnum Opus*," to which we refer, might almost presuppose that its author was a Dutchman of the period of Erasmus.

The earliest reference to "A Good Fight" that we can light upon is in a letter addressed to Mrs. Seymour in Germany.

"Trübner," he writes, "is in raptures with 'The Eighth Commandment,' and says I can be one of the greatest critics of the age, if I choose.

"I don't choose.

"Catch me at that work again !

"I have got a book over from Paris—two large volumes on the Hotels and Taverns of the Middle Ages. I find much good matter in it for 'A Good Fight.'"

Again, in a letter a few days later :

"My efforts are now directed to this—to make 'A Good Fight,' if possible, so remarkable a story that Mudie shall be forced to take copies at a fair price.

"I have written a page of 'Good Fight,' but have been compelled to stop there, and to review, and try to digest, my materials. I feel that I must not waste all this labor by producing a mediocre effect.

"It shall be the last time I ever go out of my own age.

"The same labor bestowed on a subject of the day, what would it not have done for me ?

"There is something about this weather very dispiriting. Perhaps that is what was depressing you when you wrote. I have had the same feeling once or twice since you were gone. I do not give way to it. On taking a calm review of circumstances I see no reason to despond.

"A man who steps out of the beaten track in every way as I do, must expect greater difficulties than other people. The question whether I can overcome them or not is not settled. When I produce another 'Never Too Late,' and the Cabal succeed in burking it, then I will give in.

"Not before !"

The next letter on this topic is so characteristic that we give it in its entirety, premising that Mrs. Seymour seems to have returned from Germany, and, after a flying visit to Bolton Row, to have departed to her sister and brother-in-law in Selkirkshire. We will add that Charles Reado entertained the greatest reverence for this gentleman, Mr.

Gibson, Minister of Kirkhope. He calls him elsewhere "My very dear friend."

"Thanks for your prompt letter," he says. "So you arrived at the Holy fair—*vide* that rogue Burns, his work. Small troubles, observing you were in Scotland, have descended on us like hail. Margaret has spilt grease in spots all up the stairs. It rains taxes, and Winwoods, and things.

"*Per contra* Millais has offered me £500 for 'Sir Isumbras.' So that you see I am all right there!

"Brisebarre writes from Paris and promises to back me in the Parisian press—Maquet ditto. Of the English press I have no hope, as you are well aware.

"I need try and keep my temper, and remember that my lines will outlive theirs by many years.

"The book I have had over from France is long; but full of curious knowledge. I don't despair of making 'A Good Fight' a remarkable story yet, but, of course, I cannot feel sure.

"I have twice attempted to show Conway Kensington Gardens, and twice been caught in a thunderstorm. So I have retired from the unequal contest, and he now lionizes himself.

"I hope you will have a fine day during your stay.

"Give my love to your host and hostess."

Again, and in a different vein:

"Yesterday I dined off pork chops, and they were so bad I ate but one. I then made a horrible discovery—that for years I have been overeating. Dining off that one chop and no pudding I was as light as a feather, and rather brighter for dinner than otherwise. Oh, if I had the resolution to act for ten years on that information!

"Gerard is now just getting to *France*, after many adventures in Germany. The new character I have added,

Denys, a Burgundian soldier, a cross-bowman, will, I hope and trust, please you. It will be a daring story altogether. I shall give Gerard a scene with the Pope—Pius II.

“To-day—1860—in London, an Irish laborer hits his son with a leathern strap and iron buckle, and almost flays him alive. He is remanded, but not imprisoned, but held to bail.

“In 1560, as I learn by an undertaker’s diary of that time, a master licked his apprentice boy with a *leathern strap* and *iron buckle*, and miserably excoriated him.

“They did not admit him to bail, but set him on a pillory and flogged him till the blood ran down; and set his victim bare-backed beside him to show for what crime, and how exact the retribution.”

Could he have had in memory, as he penned this narrative of poetical justice with such gusto, the thick and the thin canes of the Reverend Mr. Slatter of Rose Hill?

We now come to an episode in the record of “A Good Fight,” which was destined to give it the *coup de grâce*. It would be invidious on our part to protrude any comment on a quarrel between author and editor, neither shall we do so—albeit we have our own opinion. Charles Reade shall be allowed to state his case in his own way, and the world can form its own judgment on the merits of a dispute which would have been the more regrettable had it not in the long run conduced to the recasting of the book to its infinite advantage. He writes from Magdalen College thus:

“I am sorry to say that the editor of *Once a Week* has been very annoying, tampering with my text and so on. I have been obliged to tell him that he must distinguish between anonymous contributions and those in which an

approved author takes the responsibility by signing his own name.

“Answer. That with every wish to oblige me, he cannot resign his editorial function.

“Answer. That if he alters my text I will publicly disown his alteration in an advertisement, and send no more MS. to the office.

“On this he seems to be down on his luck a little. For he confines himself to ending my last number on the feeblest sentence *he* can find out, and begging me to end the tale as soon as possible, which of course I shall not do to oblige him. But all this is unfortunate, and makes me fear that I am a very quarrelsome man, or that other authors must be very spiritless ones.

“It is rather ungrateful on the other side, for the story has done great things for them, as far as I can learn.

“I don’t think, however, this is their opinion. They fancy that their paltry illustrations, which are far below the level of the penny press, do the business. Well, I plough on, convinced that when the “Good Fight” gets into my hands, and you and I can see it all in one view, we can make an immortal story of it by the requisite improvements.

“It has suffered in serial form by the marvellous incapacity with which the numbers have been concluded.”

Lastly,

“They are very anxious it should end. I have *accommodated* them.

“I have—‘Away with melancholy!’—reversed the catastrophe; made Gerard and his sweetheart happy; sent Kate to heaven, and they and their weekly may go to the other place. Any way the story is finished, and they are rid of me, and I of them—*forever!*

"You are quite right. I shall have many a dig for it. I don't know whether I am to blame or not.

"Is it not monstrous that a person whose name does not appear should assume to alter the text of an approved author, who signs his name to the text in question?

"Another little worry! Sampson Low, Harpers' agent, has only just let me know that Ticknor & Fields advertise to publish 'Good Fight.'

"It is very wrong, when they know I have treated with Harpers. A month ago I proposed to Low to print in advance at Clowes, and send out last sheet well ahead.

"The noodle pooh-poohed it. They must all be wiser than me. Now, too late, he sees his mistake."

Noodle here may be taken as a term of endearment, for it is not one of Charles Reade's superlatives, and he always professed a very warm regard for the venerable publisher, now, alas, no more.

Thus it happened that "A Good Fight" reverted to its author. He took it as so much material for a new, and a far grander, work.

It had not touched his ideal, nor indeed had he as yet so far mastered his enormous subject as to be fully prepared to handle it—as he would have phrased it—immortally. The rebuff must have been somewhat of a trial to his sensibilities; and we have seen that he resented the dry-nursing which some authors take with meekness and mildness. All was well, however, that ended well. *Once a Week* exposed itself to ridicule, for the collapse of the plot was transparent; and the author had virtually led up to a climax only to present a bathos, and after that to run down with comic celerity. The *fiasco* did not hurt him in the slightest degree, indeed it turned out for his benefit. He reverted to his mediæval explorations at Oxford with

fresh zest, by no means hurrying himself, and stern in his determination—now that he was put on his mettle—to prove that his editorial censor was wrong, and he right. In a word, he resolved that he would evolve a really solid work of the highest literary art.

He did so.

We will reserve the account of this supreme labor of his for another chapter.

CHAPTER XXII.

"THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH."

To appreciate Charles Reade's literary masterpiece, his most enduring success, the highest flight of his vigorous imagination, you must put yourself in the author's place.

It is a fact that more than one writer of fiction, being of the gentle sex, has made her mark by describing dramatically the love-crisis of her own life. There is no heroine to a woman's mind like herself. On that idol, especially when its heart happens to be shattered, she can lay her most startling colors. The picture she paints may be a very sublimated presentment of the original; yet in spite of this harmless unveracity will be lifelike, for it represents, in outline at all events, pure nature. Besides, every lady, like the rest of us perhaps, is so keenly in sympathy with herself. We do not propose to hurl at our author a wild accusation of being feminine. His *virilis cultus* was as pronounced as that of Achilles. Yet, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps intentionally, the crux which his genius invented in order to mar Gerard's life and love was his own, and he depicted it as one into whose soul the iron had entered.

Celibacy, like a demon—Charles Reade with amusing inconsequence styles it *a heresy*, thereby unifying such incongruities as doctrine and practice—had gripped Gerard. Celibacy also with its cruel claw held Charles Reade prisoner. Had Gerard married, he would, on the lines

of his belief, have lost his soul. Had Charles Reade married, he would have starved. Two thirds of his life had passed before he could dream of dispensing with what he often termed his prop, viz., his Fellowship at Magdalen. His youth was gone. His middle age was all but gone. He was the victim of the Cloister, if ever man was.

And hermit or monk never realized this better than Charles Reade. There must have been beneath the surface an intensity of personal feeling to paint so graphically the loss of love and home, and the dull, dogged determination to make the best of it. The reader's sensibilities are probed to the core by the sorrowful tale, so dramatic, yet dignified, and raised far above the stage level, by a singularly undramatic ending.

To avoid any possible misconception, let it not be supposed for an instant that the author identified Margaret Brandt with Mrs. Seymour. The notion would be too preposterous; the more so, because the author and the actress neither contemplated nor desired marriage—they were fast friends; that was all. Margaret was a creation, and a very lovely one; and if, as is more than probable, she had a prototype in the mind of her creator, it was certainly not a lady of mature age, gifted with a considerable aptitude for business. The unities forbid the bare suggestion.

We have already learned from Charles Reade's hurried letter that much of the pictorial accessories of the story was obtained by a careful digest of the large tractate on the Inns of the Middle Ages, which he picked up in Paris. It is a singular circumstance that no trace can be gleaned of his having paid even a flying visit to Holland; yet the Dutch detail is so strikingly faithful as to lead to the belief that he must have done so, perhaps *circa* 1859, per-

haps many years previous to the book being so much as dreamed of. This, however, must be taken for a bare surmise. In private life he was silent to the verge of taciturnity, and it seemed to be a rule with him never to refer to himself, his experience, or his travels. It transpired, for example, in his later years, that he had habitually made purchases of pictures and curios in different places; yet when he sat down to recollect where these valuables were waiting to be called for, his memory was at fault. Some he recovered; others, indeed most, were lost. His mind seemed focussed wholly on the literary work he had in hand, and seldom, if ever, to stray back as far as yesterday. He was not only uncommunicative, but mostly oblivious; nevertheless, so vivid was his imagination that he could transport himself into any scene, and depict it accurately by the aid of books or pictures. We have already seen how minutely he described the Australian gold-diggings. It is quite likely, therefore, that he may have pictured Holland without ever setting eyes upon its *canards*, *canaux*, *canaille*.*

In the preface to "*The Cloister and the Hearth*" he states that the major portion of the book has no connection with "*A Good Fight.*" The latter work has now practically no existence, having been in part merged in the former. He used his pruning knife, moreover, vigorously

* The *New York Herald*, in an obituary notice of Charles Reade, is responsible for an assertion that he journeyed to Germany and Holland in order to collect materials for "*The Cloister and the Hearth.*" We are far from desirous of contradicting this statement, but have to confess ourselves powerless to verify it. The writer was resident within the walls of Magdalen College during the period when Charles Reade was engaged on the work, and also in constant communication with him. He has no recollection of a single allusion to any such tour, neither has any other relative.

with the portions he did retain; and, as has been stated in his letters, reversed the catastrophe, thus in reality creating a new drama-novel.

The book has always aroused so much of genuine interest that we feel justified in continuing the series of letters, scribbled *currente calamo*, but affording an inkling as to its genesis. His researches for material were mainly conducted at Oxford. He ransacked the shelves of Magdalen College Library, a mine of wealth in itself, as also the Bodleian. This is his first from his rooms in college to Mrs. Seymour.

“Safe arrived—self and puppy. He has run off this morning, and, being an idiot, is lost *pro tem*.

“I came down with a Russian—probably a noble. Chatted with him, asked him to call on me, which he did. I showed him the college, but could not get much out of him about Russia. He seems to like England best in the world, for all but climate. This he pronounces more miserable than the cold of Russia.

“He says he never felt himself *a man* till he knew England, and her institutions, customs, and laws. I asked him if the officials took bribes in Russia, as reported, and he said ‘Yes.’

“I have corrected the MS. Altogether I do think that ‘A Good Fight’ will be a unique story; and surely this must tell sooner or later, since the reader thirsts for novelty. So, courage, *la camarade, le diable est mort!*”

Whether he forgot that he had written on the previous day, or imagined that he had written to some one else, does not appear. He leads off, however, with a repetition of his previous announcement.

“Safe arrived, as you see. The Queen came down to-day to see her boy. Unluckily she arrived in Magdalen

College just as I was warming on a little scene—they always do, you know.

"Seriously, if she had come at a fixed hour, I would have been at the gate to receive her.

"But any time from 12 to 2 was another thing. Carlo is very ill. I can't tell whether it is distemper or what. I can't make him eat anything.

"To-day I got oatmeal. The beggar won't touch it! I got to work nicely to-day."

Up to this point he adhered to the old title, "A Good Fight." He now seems to have exchanged it for that the story bears.

Here is an example of the vicissitudes of an author in quest of material.

"Alas, indeed," he writes, "Stuck!"

"That is to say, I found such a wealth of material about hermits in Magdalen College Library that I have filled three more of those gigantic cards.

"Now my poor little head seems constructed on so narrow a basis, that whenever the ardor of research is on, the ardor of writing is extinct. God knows whether I am in the right path or not.

"Sometimes I think, how can the public appreciate or care for all this labor? At others I say, what real reason have I to suppose that vast successes have ever been achieved without labor and self-denial?

"Sometimes I say, it must be dangerous to overload fiction with facts.

"At others, I think fiction has succeeded in proportion to the amount of fact in it.

"This much is certain: nobody has as yet produced a true hermit in fiction, and Cervantes and Scott have—a sham hermit."

"Then, when I find about five hundred famous hermits in the Church, and no age without them, I calculate that there must have been five hundred thousand obscure ones, the very nature of the character being to avoid notice. The theory then assumes an importance of another class, and becomes a trait in human nature.

"And, from the year A.D. 250 to the present time, I find they were always the friends of animals. To be sure, one of them in a rage (we all get in a rage sometimes) did excommunicate a mouse, but when the mouse died in consequence, he bitterly repented.

"The priest to whom he confessed his cruelty with tears of compunction said, 'Drat them! I wish you had excommunicated the whole race!'

"I have filled three more great cards with the matter, and I must now try to use only the very cream, and that dramatically, not preachingly. It is too late in the story for lecturing."

The next letter displays symptoms of fatigue. "I am under way again," he writes, "but rather slowly. I think this story will almost wear my mind out.

"However, I now see that, if I had not read all about hermits, and worked out these cards, this part of my story must have been all false.

"I have got a squirrel in and a robin."

He appears to have remained without a break in college, for this, as the previous letters, bears the Oxford postmark.

"Gerard," he says, "is now Vicar of Gouda, after the grand scenes in cell.

"Those scenes have not come out quite so brilliant as I hoped; but they are very well, and the situation itself has, I think, a prodigious value, and is new in fiction.

"I don't know what I have to do now, but a few desultory notices of his career as a parson, and then the unpleasant task of killing both Margaret and him.

"I hope to get to you safe and well by the ninth of September, after polishing of Ipsden and Farley Hill. Shall only shoot at Ipsden. Agree with you, why kill anything as long as there are butchers?"

The following bears the date Sept. 3, and is from Ipsden:

"I send you up the greater part of vols. 2 and 3—'The Cloister and the Hearth.'

"Please call on Mr. Bentley with them and explain that vol. 1 will end on page 36 of the present vol. 2, making 360 pp. ; vol. 2 either at 50 or 98 of present vol. 3, at the end of that string of strong situations with which you happen to be acquainted, as I read them to you at Margate, concluding with G.'s attempt at suicide.

"I am of opinion that matters quite distinct from Mr. Bentley's desire to do business with me on liberal terms, of which I am convinced, or of the merit of the book on which I have bestowed such prodigious labor, will prevent our coming together this time.

"I cannot, therefore, give him the *refusal* upon any other terms. For I feel I should be subjecting my whole work to a certain refusal, and it is not worth while.

"These materials, the time I have bestowed, and my past performances, furnish, I think, sufficient materials for a commercial decision. You can, however, freely add whatever you know of the plot, and situations, etc., not here contained, and pray give Mr. B. an unbiassed opinion. In fact, you can read him this letter if you like. I shall follow very shortly on its heels.

Yours very sincerely,

"CHARLES READE."

Two months later—the autumn—he writes thus:

"I think I shall run up to town from Saturday till Monday. I will never attempt an old-world story again. Good heavens! How often have I been stuck!

"However, I have done 150 pages, and don't seem to

dislike the story. I hope to cram it with incidents, but not to repeat the same ones."

Again :

"Story goes slow. But is to be, must be, successful—please God.

"Henceforth I shall remember the advice, *soyez de votre siècle*. I am convinced that learning and research should be applied to passing, not to past, events. In the same sense alone is Dickens a learned man, and mark the result!

"By-the-bye, I have accepted his invitation for the 18th Jan."

Again, a few weeks later :

"Denys and Gerard are parted, and the story is now in Holland, and I hope will soon be at Rome.

"When I have brought Gerard back, a monk, to Tergou, I hope to come to Bolton Row, since, after that, the matter can be calculated (I think) to a few pages.

"I can't tell whether it will succeed or not, as a whole. But there shall be great, and tremendous, and tender things in it."

Lastly, from Dogmore End :*

"You will be glad to learn that last night, at nine o'clock, amidst the cheers of my relations, I wrote the last page of this tremendous work, which in all probability will impoverish me for some time to come.

"No matter! It is done! And I breathe again. Strange to say, the last fifteen pages went smooth as oil; and I don't know whether it is parental vanity, but I think they will live!"

That prediction has been, will be, verified. The only difference of opinion is concerning its artistic value, both

* His brother William's residence, about seven miles from Henley-on-Thames.

absolute and relative. Here there exists by no means a general consensus—not a few of his critics contending that "Romola," which followed close upon its heels, contains characters more true to human nature and mediæval life, and sustains the interest throughout in a higher degree.

Without prejudging this controversy one way or the other, we will afford our readers the opportunity of contrasting the verdict of differing critics, and for this purpose select, on the side of Charles Reade, Mr. Walter Besant, and an anonymous writer in *Once a Week*; and on the side of George Eliot, Mr. W. L. Courtney; with Mr. A. C. Swinburne as neutral, albeit rather for Reade than Eliot, so far as regards this particular theme and its treatment.

First, the Pro's.

Mr. Besant writes: "There remains one book of his—it is his greatest work—and, I believe, the greatest historical novel in the language. I mean 'The Cloister and the Hearth.' It has been my happy lot to pasture in the fair fields of mediæval literature, and my delight humbly to attempt from time to time the restoration of life as it was during or before the great Renaissance. Now, life at all times, except perhaps during the cave and flint-weapon period, has been and is many-sided, complex, and perpetually varying. Think how it will fare in five hundred years with the writer who attempts to portray England in this year of grace; by what mighty labors—what examination of old documents—what comparisons, reading of contemporary essays, descriptions of functions, ceremonies, and debates, estimate of forces—as, the influence of the Land League, the real power of the Nonconformists, the strength of the Church, the prejudices of the people—he will arrive at something like a picture of life as it is now. And even

in the hands of the most skilful, how meagre will probably be the result! Because the historian will not be able to understand the relative importance of questions, nor will he perceive that what seems to him the most important of events may have seemed to us a mere trifle compared with the weight of a speech in the house, or a new book, or even an article in a magazine. Therefore I do not say that the whole of life, as it was at the end of the fourteenth century, is in 'The Cloister and the Hearth.' But I do say that there is portrayed so vigorous, lifelike, and truthful a picture of a time long gone by, and differing in every particular from our own, that the world has never seen its like. To me it is a picture of the past more faithful than anything in the works of Scott. As one reads it, one feels in the very atmosphere of the century; one breathes the air just before the great dawn of learning and religion; it is still twilight, but the birds are twittering already on the boughs; it is a time when men are weary of the past, there is no freshness or vigor in the poetry; all the tunes are old tunes. There is plenty of fanaticism, but no faith; under the tiara the Pope yawns; under the scarlet cloak the Cardinals scoff; in his chamber the scholar asks whether the newly found Greek is not better than all the ecclesiastical jargon; in the very cloister are monks secretly at work on the new learning and cursing the stupid iteration of the bell. Even the children of the soil are asking themselves, how long? Alas! they must wait till the greater Jacquerie of 1792 relieves them; there is uncertainty everywhere; there is the restless movement which goes before a change. There is, however, plenty of activity in certain directions. Soldiers fight and great lords lead armies; there are court ceremonies, at which knights feast and common people gape; prentice lads go a wandering

along the roads; with them tramp the vagrant scholars; the forests are full of robbers; the beggars are a nation to themselves, and a very horrible, noisome, miserable nation; the towns are crowded within narrow walls; fever and the plague are constantly breaking out; there is no ladder by which men can climb except that lowered for them by the Church; where a man is born, there he sticks. A fine picturesque time, with plenty of robberies and murders; vast quantities of injustice; with lords among the peasants, like locusts among corn, devouring the substance; with fierce punishments for the wicked, but not so fierce as those which certainly await most people in the next world; with gibbets, racks, red-hot pincers, wheels, processions of penitents, heavy wax candles, cutting off of hands, and every possible stimulus to virtue; yet a world in which virtue was singularly rare. All this life—and more—is in 'The Cloister and the Hearth' not described, *but acted*. The reader who knows the literature of the time says to himself as he goes on, 'Here is Erasmus; here is Froissart; here is Deschamps; here is Coquillart; here is Gringoire; here is Villon; here is Luther,' and so on, taking pleasure in proving the sources. The reader who does not know, or does not inquire, presently finds himself drawn completely out of himself and his own times; before he reaches the end he thinks like the characters in the book; but, besides, there runs through it the sweetest, saddest, and most tender love-story ever devised by wit of man. There is no heroine in fiction more dear to me than Margaret; she is always real; always the true woman; brave in the darkest hour; and forever yearning in womanly fashion for the love that has been cruelly torn from her.

"'Oh, my love,' cried the lover-priest at her death-bed, 'if thou hadst lived, doubting of thy Gerard's heart, die

* not so, for never was woman loved so tenderly as thou this ten years past.'

* " 'Calm thyself, dear one,' said the dying woman with a heavenly smile; 'I knew it, only, being but a woman, *I could not die happy till I heard thee say so.*'

"Comparison between 'The Cloister and the Hearth' and 'Romola' is forced upon one. Both books treat of the same period; similar pictures should be presented in the pages of both. Yet—what a difference! In the man's work we find, action, life, movement, surprise, reality. In the woman's work we find languor, tedium, and the talk of nineteenth-century puppets dressed in fifteenth-century clothes. Romola is a woman of the present day; Tito is a man of the present day; the scholar belongs to us; Savonarola is like a hysterical Ritualist preacher; Tessa is a modern Italian peasant girl; nothing is mediæval but the names and the costumes. Yet I believe there may be found people who call 'Romola' a great novel, and who have not even read the story of 'Gerard and Margaret!'"

The above is a lengthy extract; nevertheless to have curtailed it would have been to mutilate the ablest brief that has been held—and without retainer—for the author of "The Cloister and the Hearth."

The next, on the same side, issues from the pen of an anonymous writer, and is closely analytical. *Once a Week*, for the sake of this very book, had quarrelled with its most illustrious contributor. It may possibly have intended the article to which we now refer as an *amende*. It may be termed fairly an apologetic criticism, as genuine as it is honorable.

"In 1860," it commences, "Mr. Reade produced a mediæval novel with an idea-ed title, 'The Cloister and the Hearth.'

"His faithful imitator (George Eliot) soon followed with a mediæval novel, whose title was un-idea-ed, 'Romola.'

"Here the two writers meet on an arena that tests the highest quality they both pretend to—imagination.

"What is the result? In 'The Cloister and the Hearth' you have the middle ages long and broad. The story begins in Holland, and the quaint Dutch figures live; it goes through Germany, and Germany lives; it picks up a French arbalestrier, and the mediæval French soldier is alive again. It goes to Rome, and the Roman men and women live again.

"Compare with this the narrow canvas of 'Romola,' and the faint colors. The petty politics of mediæval Florence made to sit up in the grave, but not to come out of it. The gossip of modern Florence turned on the mediæval subjects and called mediæval gossip. Romola herself is a high-minded, delicate-minded, sober-minded lady of the nineteenth century, and no other. She has a gentle, but tame and non-mediæval, affection for a soft egotist who belongs to that or any age you like. One great historical figure, Savonarola, is taken, and turned into a woman by a female writer—sure sign imagination is wanting. There is a dearth of powerful incidents, though the time was full of them, as 'The Cloister and the Hearth' is full of them. There you have the broad features of that marvellous age, so full of grand anomalies; the fine arts and the spirit that fed them—the feasts, the shows, the domestic life, the laws, the customs, the religion, the roads and their perils, the wild beasts disputing the civilized continent with man—man uppermost by day, the beasts by night—the hostelries, the robbers, the strange vows, the convents, shipwrecks, sieges, combats, escapes, a robber's

slaughter-house burned, and the fire lighting up trees clad with snow. And through all this a deep current of love, passionate yet pure, ending in a mediæval poem; the battle of ascetic religion against our duty to our neighbors, which was the great battle of the time that shook religious souls. But perhaps we shall be told this comparison is beside the mark; that a dearth of incidents is better than a surfeit, and that it is in the higher art of drawing characters George Eliot stands supreme, and Charles Reade fills an insignificant place. We will abide by that test in this comparison.

“What genuine mediæval characters—to be compared with those of Sir Walter Scott, for instance—live in the memory, after reading the two works we are now comparing?

“‘The Cloister and the Hearth’ is a gallery of such portraits, painted in full colors to the life. ‘Romola’ is a portfolio of delicate studies. ‘Romola’ leaves on the memory: 1. A young lady of the nineteenth century, the exact opposite of a mediæval woman. 2. The soft egotist, an excellent type. 3. An innocent little girl. 4. Savonarola emasculated. The other characters talk nineteen to the dozen, but they are little more than voluble shadows.

“‘The Cloister and the Hearth’ fixes on the mind: 1. The true lover, hermit, and priest, Gerard. 2. The true lover, mediæval and northern, Margaret of Sevenbergen. 3. Dame Catharine, economist, gossip, and mother. 4. The Dwarf with his big voice. 5. The angelic cripple, little Kate. 6. The Burgomaster. 7. The Burgundian soldier, a character hewn out of mediæval rock. 8. The gaunt Dominican, hard but holy. 9. The Patrician monk, in love with heathenism, but safe from fiery fagots because he believed in the Pope. 10. The Patrician Pope, in love

with Plutarch, and sated with controversy. 11. The Princess Clœlia, a true mediæval. 12. The bravo's wife, a link between Ancient and Mediæval Rome.

"Philip of Burgundy does but cross the scene; yet he leaves his mark. Margaret Van Eyck is but flung on the broad canvas, yet that single figure so drawn has suggested three volumes to another writer.

"You can find a thousand Romolas in London, because she is drawn from observation, and is quite out of place in a mediæval tale. But you cannot find the characters of 'The Cloister and the Hearth,' because they are creations."

Thus, and with no small enthusiasm, the admirers of Charles Reade. We now turn to others, who, though willing to admit our author's ability, view him from a standpoint of their own.

First, Mr. W. L. Courtney:

"The crucial test (*i. e.*, as to whether the ordinary novel of Charles Reade is or is not 'a somewhat amorphous collection of *pièces de conviction*') is afforded by 'The Cloister and the Hearth.' If a man can read it through in a sitting, as he can 'Griffith Gaunt;' if he is carried through it with the same rapt attention, the same suspension of the critical faculty which he experiences when dealing with a work of real artistic construction, then, to such a man at all events, the invention in the book is of equal power with the facts. But if he takes in such draughts as he is able to stand, being incapable of assimilating it in its entirety; if he feels now and again as if he were laboriously getting up a learned work on the Middle Ages, as is the case, it may be suspected, with most readers, that the natural conclusion is, that 'The Cloister and the Hearth,' though a work of great learning and industry, and containing in the fortunes of Gerard and Margaret a love-story of almost

idyllic sweetness, is yet not a work of art. 'Here,' one may say (Mr. Walter Besant has actually said it), 'is Erasmus, here is Froissart, here is Deschamps, here is Coquilart, here is Gringoire, here is Villon, here is Luther;' and just for that reason it is imperfect. The scholar's learning is standing out of the holes in the artistic armor; it smells too much of the academic oil."

This, after the manner of inappreciative censure, while apparently equitable, overshoots the mark. In the first place "The Cloister and the Hearth" in point of length exceeds "Griffith Gaunt" by more than a third—nearly a half, and that alone would preclude its being devoured at a sitting. Moreover, the fortunes of Gerard are subjected to a natural trichotomy. He is genuine lover, rover, and at last Platonic lover—*alias* priest, and the story follows this division. Each part is homogeneous, nor will most people object that by the time they have reached the conclusion they have forgotten the antecedent portions of the story. This allegation of ours is the more verifiable, because really the golden thread of the idyllic love-story is never severed. It holds together the members, even when they seem to be most *disjecta*. "The Cloister and the Hearth" can hardly be said to err in the direction of another historical novel, "John Inglesant," which for lack of an idyllic thread rambles aimlessly. However, Mr. Courtney has narrated his own mental sensations; and if those of the average reader harmonize with them, then of course there must be some force in his contention. We avow ourselves under the impression that he stands almost alone in discovering no magic spell in a work of genius, as well as of research—but of course we may be partial. *Quot homines tot sententiæ*. There are some people whom "Hamlet" bores, and who snore through "As You Like It."

Mr. S. S. Conant, of *The Albany Evening Journal*, U.S.A., is responsible for a story concerning Charles Reade which seems to indicate that he himself was more inclined towards Mr. Courtney's than towards Mr. Besant's view. A stranger once complimented him on "*The Cloister and the Hearth*" as his *best* novel, whereupon the author's eye flashed indignation, and he told his eulogist, then and there, that if that was his opinion, he was only fit for a lunatic asylum.

We have, perhaps inequitably, placed Mr. Swinburne partly in the same category with Mr. Courtney. Both writers are masters of English and of analysis; but the latter being an essayist pure and simple, and himself undramatic, has less affinity with the dramatist, and more with the philosophical writer who utilized her slender tales to adorn a profound philosophy, and pointed her satire on faith by means of character. Mr. Swinburne is more righteous than Mr. Courtney, in that he blends criticism with appreciation. "Mr. Reade's didactic types, or monitory figures," he writes, "are almost unmistakable—and unmistakable as failures. Hawes, and even Grotait are not the creatures of a dramatist, they are the creatures of a mechanist; you see the action of the wire-puller behind, at every movement they make; you feel at every word they utter that the ruffian is speaking by the book, talking in character, playing up to his part. Too refined and thoughtful an artist to run the least risk of such an error, George Eliot, on the other hand, wanted the dramatic touch, the skilful and vivid sleight of craftsmanship, which gives a general animation at once to the whole group of characters, and to the whole movement of the action in every story, from the gravest to the slightest, ever written by Charles Reade. A story better conceived, or better composed, better constructed, or better related

than 'The Cloister and the Hearth,' it would be difficult to find anywhere; while the most enthusiastic devotees of 'Romola' must surely admit the well-nigh puerile insufficiency of some of the resources by which the story has to be pushed forward, or warped round, before it can be got into harbor. There is an almost infantile audacity of awkwardness in the device of handing your heroine at a pinch into a *casually* empty boat, which drifts her away to a *casually* plague-stricken village, there to play the part of a *casual* sister of mercy, dropped from the sky by providential caprice at the very nick of time, when the novelist was at a loss for some more plausible contrivance, among a set of people equally strange to the reader and herself.

"Again, I must confess my agreement with the critics who find in her study of Savonarola a laborious, conscientious, absolute failure—as complete as the failure of his own actual attempt to purge and renovate the epoch of the Borgias by what Mr. Carlyle would have called the 'Morrison's Pill' of Catholic Puritanism. Charles Reade's 'Dominican' is worth a dozen such 'wersch,' ineffectual, invertebrate studies, taken by marshlight and moonshine, as this spectre of a spectre, which flits across the stage of romance to as little purpose as did its original across the page of history; but when we come to the minor characters and groups, the superiority of the male novelist is so obvious, and so enormous, that any comparison between his breathing figures and the stiff, thin outlines of George Eliot's phantasmal puppets would be unfair, if it were not unavoidable. The variety of life, the vigor of action, the straightforward and easy mastery displayed at every step and in every stage of the fiction, would of themselves be enough to place 'The Cloister and the Hearth' among the very greatest masterpieces of narrative; while its

tender truthfulness of sympathy, its ardor and depth of feeling, the constant sweetness of its humor, the frequent passion of its pathos, are qualities in which no other tale of adventure so stirring and incident so inexhaustible can pretend to a moment's comparison with it—unless we are foolish enough to risk a reference to the name by which no contemporary name can hope to stand higher, or shine brighter, for prose, or for verse, than does Shakespeare's greatest contemporary by the name of Shakespeare."

To quote another word after this magnificent exordium would be impertinent and of the nature of anti-climax. We said that Mr. Swinburne approached Charles Reade with the censorship of a critic. His noble words tell in an excess of majestic language his enthusiasm, and that—not sarcasm—is the highest form of intelligent criticism.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"HARD CASH."

FOR once the public and the critics were unanimous, and the chorus of approval which greeted "The Cloister and the Hearth" gave its author heart of grace. The great book was alike so much of a study, and so altogether a poem, as to have placed Charles Reade in the foremost rank of literature. No carping detractor could decry it as sensational. No candid friend could condemn it with faint praise. It exacted homage from every man and woman of brains; and henceforward the name of Charles Reade could never be mentioned except with honor.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and the lady who, at the moment, and indeed since, was being steadily written up under the style of the greatest of contemporary novelists, at once bowed the knee before success, and set to work to plough with Charles Reade's heifer.

We may remark here, *passim*, that the artistic ideal of the author of "The Cloister and the Hearth," and that of the author of "Romola," were dissimilar. The former, even in four volumes, could be nothing if not dramatic. The latter was by nature so essentially undramatic as when she attempted a situation to plunge hopelessly out of her depth, and barely escape a bathos by concealing her utter incapacity under a thick veil of description. George Eliot, in respect of style, depth of thought, and diagnosis of character, justly commanded universal admiration; indeed, her

artistic excellence must have been supreme in that it could invest the tame and commonplace with a special charm. Whether she would not have risen higher had she been less prolix, and more dramatic, may be open to surmise. Enough that, if she could esteem Charles Reade so thoroughly as to adopt ostentatiously a theme he had made his own, he in turn was by no means so appreciative of her pen. He rated Mr. Wilkie Collins far above George Eliot on account of his mastery in the art of plot-weaving; indeed, to be candid, we have to admit on behalf of our author, a somewhat faulty appreciation of a genius in every way dissimilar to himself. The late Mr. Winwood Reade narrated concerning the sable houris of Central Africa that they shrank from the white man, not merely as repulsive, but as being, in respect of complexion—from their point of view—leprous. In like fashion Charles Reade revolted from a novel, differing *toto cœlo* from a drama in novel form. Such a work of art not merely failed to please, it positively irritated him. The following letter displays somewhat of this temper. His nature, we must premise with the strongest emphasis, was much too high-souled to be capable of the pettiness of jealousy, least of all, of a woman. He could pay a handsome tribute to such lady novelists as Miss Braddon, Ouida, Miss Broughton, and his niece, the author of "Rose and Rue." He worshipped Charles Dickens, honored Thackeray, and on one occasion thought Trollope worth dramatizing. But he had no stomach for the fulsome eulogy piled on George Eliot, the less so because it became an open secret that this bold advertisement was the outcome of judicious wire-pulling. As an artist he conceived it the right of every member of his craft to demand a fair field and no favor. No marvel, therefore, if when, stung by a keen sense of injustice, he delivered himself

rather slightly of the idol before whom, at the bidding of her own Nebuchadnezzar behind the scenes, the entire press of England did obeisance.

To Mrs. Seymour he writes: "I send you both *The Cornhill* and *Temple Bar* by book post, since there is matter in each that interests.

"I can see no trace of George Eliot in the story called 'Romola'—yet I don't know how to escape the conclusion that it is her; for a story by George Eliot is advertised in the July number of *The Cornhill*, and in the current number of *The Athenæum*, and *Thackeray* is displaced to make room for the garrulous lady or gentleman, whichever it be.

"However, after all I am not well read in Georgy Porgy's works. But certainly this does not come up to *my* idea of her. Is it egotism, or am I right in thinking that this story of the fifteenth century has been called into existence by my success with the same epoch? If it is Georgy Porgy, why then Lewes has been helping her! All the worse for her. The gray mare is the better horse. Anyway I hope this is the story that Smith has been ass enough to give £5000 for."

There is an acerbity in this, accentuated perhaps by the conviction that his good friend Mr. Smith, whom elsewhere he styles "The Prince of Publishers," and "That most princely gentleman," should lose by "Romola." Apart from that, the mind which had devoted years of incessant toil to this same fifteenth century could but be sensitive of anachronisms, and conscious of faulty drawing. Of course it was galling to perceive a subservient press belauding a distorted picture, and far exceeding the praise it had grudgingly awarded his own masterpiece. Moreover, if ever there lived a man inspired with a passion for justice, it was Charles Reade. This virtue to him meant all

the virtues condensed, and his championship of Fletcher, Lambert, the Stauntons, Valentine Baker, and many others, proved conclusively that if he did resent injustice to himself, he was even more ready to avenge others. George Eliot, who needed no factitious support, bounced on the stage to play to a house crammed in every inch with the *claque*. The anti-Christian ring, which to an almost indefinite extent influences the daily and weekly press and the leading magazines, rallied to a man round the strong woman—strong in her will, in her animalism, in her command of thought and diction—and by a combined effort placed her on a pinnacle; while so subtle was her method that the warmest advocates of the very Christianity she held up to ridicule were hoodwinked into joining in the general chorus of admiration. Charles Reade held her cheap, simply because he realized more acutely than the rest the inherent defect of her art; but it may safely be affirmed that he would have passed her unnoticed but for the venal pæans that deafened his ears and aroused his righteous indignation. Since then much has happened, and George Eliot, her works and ways, may be safely relegated to the judgment of the twentieth century. Not Charles Reade alone, but others also, have little reason to dread the ultimate verdict, the contrast between puffery and priority. The process of natural selection, which already has eliminated from the book-shelf some tons of temporary successes, may yet dispense with such interminable nebulæ as, for example, "Daniel Deronda." Even genius, *minus* dramatic instinct, *mole ruit sud*.

It has been narrated already how—in the interests of the justice he loved so ardently—Charles Reade extracted the young man Fletcher from an asylum, and provided him with alimony and law expenses for an entire twelvemonth.

The chief witnesses for the sanity of this alleged lunatic were Doctors Dickson and Rutledge. With the former of these gentlemen Charles Reade established friendly relations, and eventually induced him to place in his hands a mass of material relating to the subject of lunacy generally, and the working of the existing lunacy laws. It is to this fact that we are indebted for perhaps the most thrilling of all Charles Reade's romances.

In the preface to "Hard Cash" its author states that, "like 'The Cloister and the Hearth,' it is a matter-of-fact romance; a fiction built on truths; and that these same truths have been gathered by long, severe, and systematic labor, from a multitude of volumes, pamphlets, journals, reports, blue-books, *manuscript narratives*, letters, and living people sought out, examined, and cross-examined to get at the truth on each main topic." The manuscript narratives here referred to were from the pen of Dr. Dickson himself. They were digested, analyzed, and purged of superfluities by the patient care of Charles Reade, and, after that, classified for use under the generic title, "Dickybairdiana." That, however, was not enough. The medical man who had a soul above his profession, and moreover was blessed with a very pronounced individuality of his own, deserved a niche in the book to which he supplied, not indeed art, but raw material, and Charles Reade has accordingly rescued the worthy man from oblivion.

"Dickybaird," he writes from Magdalen, "comes down to-day to sit for his portrait (unconsciously)."

Like "The Cloister and the Hearth," "Hard Cash" was written almost entirely within the college walls. It was a dreary life for a man so completely out of tune with Oxford. With the single exception of his nephew, who as chaplain resided in college, but was much occupied with

clerical and tutorial work, he associated with no one, rarely entering the common room, never dining in hall, and attending the chapel only on Sunday afternoon. The hours were spent in the libraries or at his desk. He complained bitterly of dulness, and seems to have had almost a school-boy's longing for home; yet he stuck manfully to his self-imposed task. For he was possessed by a double ambition, to add to his laurels, and to effect another social reform. It was his mission to gibbet abuses and injuries, to set the ball rolling, in the hope that sooner or later the legislature would spare a week or so from the incessant game of scrambling for office, in order to stamp his ideas with the hall-mark of authority. He was the pioneer, and nobody thanked him, nobody recognized his honest labor. Virtue in his case was its own reward.

Charles Dickens appears to have made overtures to him for a serial on more than one occasion. Since Bulwer's original introduction they had become such warm friends that afterwards he referred to Dickens as "my master." Immediately on the appearance of "The Cloister and the Hearth," Mr. Wills, the great novelist's partner in *All the Year Round*, submitted a tangible proposal, to which at first Charles Reade demurred, not so much on the score of terms—£5 a page being the sum offered—as because Mr. Wills wished to retain the American rights, at that time worth about £300.

The following to Mrs. Seymour is, apparently, from Magdalen: "I am sorry," he writes, "the letter and agreement" (query, draft-agreement?) "are locked up indefinitely, as it makes it difficult for me to reply to Dickens's invitation. I think I shall simply send him a line that I have been advised of Wills's missive, but it is not yet come to hand; and I am here for some days.

"The post is an excellent institution, though you ladies hate it so as a vehicle.

"I have had a fine rout among my papers, and am getting into beautiful order.

"Before letting" (query, Bolton Row?) "I shall relieve the storeroom of some more of my rubbish, and store it in my old boxes in the back bedroom. This will leave me room for my note-books, my invaluable note-books, with which I have done nothing, literally nothing, up to date.

"I think they *must* have me for *All the Year Round*, for Dickens is working on a shilling serial, and Collins going to *Cornhill*. So I shall stand firm about the American sheets, and, please God, shall publish the new story, hot (*i. e.*, writing each number up to time, instead of completing the whole before commencement) for *All the Year Round*. A clause gives me the right to bring it out three weeks before terminating in the periodical, and when we have made £5000 by publication we will combine a little dramatic spec."

Pending the settlement of terms with Mr. Dickens, he seems to have been engaged in dramatizing "It is Never Too Late to Mend," and this probably is the "spec." to which he alludes. His next letter runs thus:

"Last night young Yates performed a lecture, and I fell in with him. Asked this evening by Mr. Alderman Spiers to meet him and a painter, and Mr. Hepworth Dixon. I am going.

"I believe personal contact softens downright asperities" (this appears to have reference to the immemorial feud between Town and Gown, Mr. Spiers being a local tradesman of a very high culture—a noble-minded citizen). "We shall see.

“Would you believe it? I was so interrupted yesterday that I had only time to reach the *coup* of Crawley being brought on arrested, and you know *I won't work Sunday*. I think a quarter of an hour on Monday ought to do it.

“Dickens's duplicate agreement is signed and sent to Magdalen College, *Cambridge*, so Wills tells me in a humorous note. However, the bargain is struck, and I must put my shoulder at once to the wheel.

“Smith's note offered me £2000 for a novel—copyright four years—lowest price 5s., and another £1000 if published in the *Cornhill Magazine*. Cash down on receipt of MS. Please not speak of it, but advise me if you can. The objection is, that he wishes to hold the absolute discretion of publishing it in *The Cornhill* or not. Now £2000 might not compensate me for the loss of the periodical market. Suppose he decided only to publish as a book! For instance, Dickens gives me £800. Add America £300, the balance of £2000 is only £900. But my Library Edition is worth more than that, or full that. However, you think of it. I am puzzled, and have not yet replied.”

The sentence “*I won't work Sunday*” may be quoted as one among many indications of religious feeling, the undercurrent which, in the fulness of time, was to roll in a grand volume to the surface. Taken with numerous other excerpts from his letters and his books, it may serve as a rejoinder to the slander of a *soi-disant* friend, who hurled against him, while his remains were barely cold, the charge of religious melancholia. He would not have thanked such friendship.

Mr. Edmund Yates, in the columns of *The World*, brightened a characteristic obituary notice of our author by a genial reference to the knight-service rendered him by

his brother-citizen of the republic of literati. "Many years ago," he wrote, "I went to lecture at Oxford, staying with Mr. Spiers, where Hepworth Dixon and E. M. Ward, R.A., were my fellow-guests. Just before going into the lecture-room I was told by Mr. Phenè Spiers, the well-known architect, that it was the pleasant custom of the undergraduates to chaff and bait every lecturer. Prepared by this, after I had spoken for a quarter of an hour with constant interruptions, I closed my notes, remarking, as they did not wish to hear me, I certainly had no desire to address them; and, wishing them 'good-evening,' retired from the platform. The place was full, and there were many people who had come from a distance, and had ordered their carriages an hour later; but I was firm in my refusal to continue, and this caused a tremendous row, with many threats of personal violence, from which I was only extricated by the appearance on the scene of the well-known form of Charles Reade, who, haranguing the mob, claimed me as an old friend, and declared I was perfectly right in declining to submit to their impertinence.

"Reade's rooms at Magdalen were an extraordinary sight, books piled on the floor and elsewhere in endless profusion, MSS. littered about, scarcely a chair to be found—more like Mr. Fips's rooms in Austin Friars, into which Tom Pinch was inducted."

It will be remarked that Charles Reade does not so much as hint that he was the *Deus ex machina* to save Mr. Edmund Yates's skin, but that the latter gentleman hastened to acknowledge the obligation. The incident was equally honorable to both.

From that moment onwards our author labored to produce "Hard Cash," availing himself occasionally of what

distractions Oxford could afford. This is what he has to say after a short spell of work:

"I wish I could write more cheerfully about the story ; but it is no use telling lies. I feel as if there was go in me. But it is partly Dickson's fault. His ill-written, inarticulate compositions have almost broken my heart. Never was there a writer so inconsecutive and ill-arranged. Well, he shall pay for it. I have pasted a whole screen over with his lines and topics, arranging them in something like order.

"There has been a great cricket match, all England eleven against sixteen of Oxford. Three days' match, resulting *in a tie*. My nephew, captain of the University players" (Henry St. John Reade, then scholar of University College, afterwards the Squire of Ipsden), "distinguished himself considerably. I saw a good deal of the match, including the finish. It was wonderfully exciting.

"I have invited three undergraduates to dinner, on the distinct understanding they are to be pumped.

"This is all. You may imagine how monotonous life is; but I should be happy enough if I saw the story growing."

Again, a few days later:

"Here are great facilities for reading. The Radcliffe Library is fitted up like the British Museum. A good stock of books are within your reach in the building, and they communicate with the Bodleian, and get you any book you want. I have read and taken notes, but cannot write. Don't feel to know enough. But it is always the same story now. And I always end by getting over it, you know.

"The three numbers that are written read well. It is Dickson gives me so much trouble with his confounded unmethodical way of writing. However, I have papered

one side of a screen with *classified* extracts from his works, and now I am at others. I mean to make him break out from prose to verse in conversation just as he does, and to use his own lines. It will be new and droll, I think."

Again, two months later:

"I do nothing but write 'Hard Cash,' and very hard work it is. I send another number by this post, and really it does not read badly. To-day I finish the number I ought to have finished yesterday, landing A. in asylum 3, whence he escapes, I hope, in the next number. I have got too much work in hand to be very dull."

This was succeeded by a somewhat brighter letter.

"Your beautiful friends, the deer," he writes, "have developed a trait which I remember of old. They fight in October, and always on Sunday." (N.B. His rooms looked out on the deer park of the College.) "Yesterday I heard the well-known click of the horns. I looked out and there was a brown deer and a fallow deer" (query, dappled?—all the Magdalen deer are *fallow*) "hard at it. They fought for about an hour, in which they worked round to the front. I came down and found the brown driven against the wall, and the other facing. Presently I saw the brown down, and knowing he must be killed if something was not done, I ran up and drove the fallow away."

"Presently an idiot of an undergraduate, not content to let well alone, gets over the rails; but this brought the brown one up, who ran a little way, and then sank down, in which posture the other vicious brute instantly made at him, and gave him an awful push."

"It seemed to take him on the shoulder, and if it did, he is venison. But I really believe he was clever enough to turn his head even in that posture, and receive it on his horns. At least I see him about to-day, though rather stiff."

"I have contrived to leave behind me two small brown volumes called 'Voyages de Montaigne.' They are bound exactly like 'Rabelais,' which is on the hall table, I think. Will you send them down with all despatch, accompanied, if possible, by 'Herder's Epidemics,' which I lent Dr. Dickson? It is, however, 'Montaigne' I am most in want of. I feel like a man walking up a mountain. What I have done is good, I think; but so much seems to be done."

As a matter of fact the aforesaid stag was so severely wounded that it had to be taken to the college stables and assigned a stall. Here, under the fostering care of John, the groom, it grew so singularly domesticated that it would eat bread out of your hand, and seemed quite grateful for being preserved from its implacable enemy. It recovered, put on adipose tissue, and in the form of venison graced the high table at the succeeding "Gaudy."

As the book progressed his spirits rose proportionately.

"I have left off sugar, which I believe to be poison," he writes; "and, do you know, I relish everything I eat since I left it off. Is not that curious? This morning I made the novel reflection that bread-and-butter is nice. Recall to your mind my tirades against that innocent combination !

"I am not at all in bad spirits now, thank God !

"I already possessed one of the books Gibson (the minister of Kirkhope) was good enough to recommend. I have obtained the others, and four more in Nisbett's list; but Gibson, as might be expected, had recommended the *best* ones.

"Simultaneously arrived yesterday a letter from my agent Cornwallis, saying that Harper positively declined my terms, and a line from Harper virtually accepting said terms.

"Corny wanted the story for some mad periodical venture on which he is going to enter—in *full civil war*. Oh, world, world !

"This reminds me of the illustrious chairman's witticism, Tom Taylor, at a dramatic and equestrian dinner. 'The society does not propose to employ *an agent*. The reason, as far as I can understand, is an etymological one. Agent is derived from a Latin word "*agere*," "to do," and agents have always been just to their derivation by *doing* their principals.'

"Luckily, by one of those gusts of caution which you have observed, I had already told Corny I should not receive Harper's answer through him."

Again :

"I have shaken off much of my lethargy since I finished Dickson's works; and I believe his detestable, rambling way of writing, and eternal repetition, caused my woe.

"I am now working on Jeaffreson's book, who is also a rambling, disconnected creature, but not so bad as Dickson.

"Yesterday a bailiff got into an undergraduate's room with an execution, and there remained. The undergraduates put their heads together, and finding it would be dangerous to use violence, adopted the following means: They shoved hot shovels sprinkled with cayenne in at the window, and sprinkled assafœtida. But the grand card was sulphuretted hydrogen gas, which, by some means unknown to me, they liberated from its sulphate, and blew through the letter-box.

"In a word, they stunk him out; and I need scarcely say they kept him out as soon as he emerged for vital air.

"We live in an age in which science is diffused, and made useful as well as exalting."

There is a fine flavor of Goldwin Smith's green coat about this, as also the next :

“I heard some crackers, and looking out of my window saw the Tower with two long lines of bright red running up it from bottom to top. Then looking farther to the right, I saw in the chorister's playground two enormous bonfires. So I put on my cap, and went there.

“The flame rose thirty feet, and all the elm-trees in the neighborhood a bright yellow. I am now come in, stinking of naphtha—some young gentleman having, doubtless, thought it a fair exercise of juvenile skill to level a fire-ball at Dr. Reade.

“I approve at bottom, but stink all the same.”

In the meanwhile “*Hard Cash*” was running its course through Charles Dickens's admirable magazine; but incredible though the fact seems to us at this date, it does not appear to have been cordially welcomed by its readers. The devotees of Dickens may have resented the substitution of another author for their incomparable favorite; yet in the English language there exist few, if any, works of fiction more exciting than “*Hard Cash.*” True, it trenched on ground already occupied by “*Valentine Vox,*” yet in a totally different vein, while the sea scenes were unique. The author was able to refer both to a brother who had been a sailor, and to a nephew in the Royal Navy. He himself had experienced the dangers of the deep, and the quality of those who go down to the sea in ships, during his spell of herring-fishing; and if *mal de mer* kept him ashore, and deprived him of the pleasure a trip to America would have afforded him, he loved the salt truly. That the book should have disappointed Dickens in any sense is unaccountable, yet so it was.

The following letter tells the tale, gracefully:

"I should have been glad to give you another fortnight at Kirkhope," he writes to Mrs. Seymour, from Bolton Row; "and I was rather in hopes the minister's visit might have been later. However, I shall be very glad to see you both on the last day, or last but one, of September.

"I am going to Ipsden, but not for long. I think I shall postpone my visit to the Pearsons.

"Wills called the other day, and reassured me with 'Hard Cash.' They would not care if it ran fifty numbers; but they want to end their tenth volume with the conclusion either of 'Hard Cash' or of its successor. Peevish nonsense! The story has done them no good, in fact they print three thousand copies less than at the outset. But they seem to bear it very well, and ascribe the decline to other causes. Wills is sure it will be a great hit as a book, and Dickens swears by it. So now you have both sides of the matter."

The work, as is stated boldly in the preface to Messrs. Chatto's excellent edition, stung the profession to the quick. Its author was handled insultingly by certain protesting doctors, notably a Dr. Bushnan, physician to a private lunatic asylum in Wiltshire. This was, as it proved, a blunder. Charles Reade, following the old canon of Aristotle, had taken facts for his starting-point, and was armed with them *cap à pie*. As for the redoubtable Bushnan—an Irishman probably, if one may judge by his name—he was confuted by a singular *argumentum ad hominem*, being turned out of his own, as he stated, faultless asylum, owing to circumstances which confirmed all that Charles Reade had alleged. As that earnest assailant of cruelty and injury urged to *The Saturday Review*, a man must be six times a greater writer than ever lived, ere he could

exaggerate suicide, despair, and the horrors that drove young and old to them, or—write a libel on hell.

It was during the progress of "Hard Cash" that Mrs. Reade breathed her last. She was *en route* to her dear old home at Ipsden, where then resided, as tenant of his elder brother, her dutiful son Edward, and was compelled to halt at Reading. Son Charles was summoned to her bedside, but arrived too late. This is his missive to Mrs. Seymour, who seems to have started the same morning for Kirkhope:

"I went down to Reading by the twelve o'clock train, being convinced by a sadness that came over me last night, and which you may have observed, that all was over.

"It was so.

"My dear mother departed this life at twelve last night, after some hours of complete unconsciousness. Dr. Woodhouse had his hand on her pulse.

"She suffered from oppressed breathing early in the day, but this had ceased. And, at the last, she did not die, but merely ceased to live. She drew her last breath just as she drew the one before it, and my sister could see no change in her dear face when she was gone.

"Such was the peaceful close of a good life, that had in very truth become a burden. The loss of her mind in so great a degree, and the fear of complete imbecility, do much to reconcile me to the inevitable separation. Still, *it must be felt*.

"What years and what memories rise before me! I send off this hasty line."

It *was* felt and at the moment of writing, for the letter from end to end is blotted with tears.

The little lady, who came from the society of royalty as a bride to grace a humble home at Ipsden in 1790, rests

by the side of her noble husband in the old churchyard. It was more like a triumph than a funeral. The aged poor whom her bounty had fed, the children grown to maturity whom she had taught, thronged the bier; and it was remarked that, just as at the obsequies of another in Willesden churchyard some eighteen years later, Charles Reade seemed to stagger under the weight of grief.

He kept his mother's letters under the title "*Reliquiæ Sacræ*," and wrote upon them as an epitaph, "Blessed be her memory."

Is it paradoxical to suggest that, in the mind that could thus to the last retain a vivid sentiment of adoration for a good mother, there must have existed a well-spring of good?

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DRAMA "SERA NUNQUAM."

THE little spec. promised to Mrs. Seymour, on the conclusion, if successful, of "Hard Cash," remained in abeyance for some time. A friendly critic once styled the stage Charles Reade's will-o'-the-wisp. That in a pecuniary sense was true, and when his eulogist in *Temple Bar* sneered at a venerable Presbyterian divine for not declining a small legacy, because, forsooth, the money wherewith that bequest would be paid was "earned" (*sic*) by a playwright, he omitted, with singular inconsequence, to strike a debtor and creditor account between Charles Reade and the theatre. The novelist made money, handsome sums at times, by his novels; the dramatist was singularly unfortunate in nearly all his theatrical speculations. In short, so far from the theatre having contributed to his fortune, it actually diminished it. His Presbyterian friend and mentor did not handle theatrical gold, for there was none to handle.

We will at once, however, place our author's connection with the drama on its real basis. It was his ambition. He held the drama to be the apex of all art, the superior of poetry, painting, sculpture, music, architecture. To musical composers he could be unjust; and we have seen him throw down a volume of poems with the sarcastic comment, "Beyond my comprehension." As we have already said, a novel obtained value in his eyes in propor-

tion to its dramatic quality. Such being the bent of his mind, it seemed to resolve in a circle round the stage. If he wrote a successful novel, his first thought was, how would it play? He craved to see his characters at work, to witness his situations; and to hear the thud of the gallery's boots, the roar of its many-tongued throat, the applause of its horny hands. His one desire was to make mankind feel, and be conscious of doing so. That was why he could tolerate criticism with less equanimity than a schoolboy the cane. The critics were too pachydermatous, too case-hardened for feeling; and, worse still, they spoke in accents of ice on behalf of a public he had warmed to enthusiasm.

At last, after a lapse of many years, the course of events brought him back to the theatre he loved so ecstasically. He shall tell how it all came about in his own language. The following fragment is entitled, with somewhat of the acerbity of the spoiled child—

“READE'S LUCK.

“Autobiography is a vile, egotistical thing. It always must be. But there is a set-off: you learn something real about the man, and that is what you will never learn from anybody else.

“Let this, and my recent wrongs, be my excuse for troubling you with one chapter of my public life. I cannot divest such a thing of egotism, any more than I can wash the spots out of a leopard; but I promise it shall not be unmixed egotism, but shall lead to general conclusions of public utility.

“In that reservoir of delights, the ‘Arabian Nights,’ nothing is more charming than the story of ‘Sindbad the Sailor,’ and the art with which it is introduced: a poor,

half-starved fellow, misfortune's butt, comes upon a gay company feasting luxuriously; at the head of the table sits a white-headed senior, the host; homage surrounds him; slaves watch his hand; friends hang upon his words; he is a type of ease, luxury, wealth, respectability. The worn and hungry traveller stands apart and glares upon banquet and host, and his heart sinks lower than ever. Contrasting his hard lot with the luxury before him, he murmurs at the inequality of things, and the injustice of fortune.

"The next moment he would gladly recall his words; for a servant comes and tells him the master of the feast would speak to him; he goes trembling, and expecting bastinado.

"*'Sit down by me,'* says the host, and orders his plate to be heaped.

"When he has eaten his fill, the venerable senior says, quietly, *'I will tell you the story of my life.'*

"Then the lucky man tells the unlucky one such a tale of adventures, perils, wounds, hardships, sufferings, and despair, as makes the unlucky man think light of his own griefs. Through all these dangers and horrors had Sindbad the persevering passed, ere he got to be Sindbad the seeming lucky.

"Now writers are not Sindbads, nor lead adventurous lives; yet at the bottom of things, dissimilar on the surface, lies often a point of similitude. And so when I read, or hear people talk of one Charles Reade's universal success, of his flashy but popular style, of his ease and affluence, I wear a sickly smile, and think sometimes of *'Sindbad the Sailor,'* not lucky, but very unlucky and persevering—for, by Heaven, it has never been smooth sailing with me!

“In the year 1835 I began to make notes with a view to writing fiction, but, fixing my mind on its masterpieces in all languages and all recorded times, I thought so highly of that great and difficult art that for fourteen years I never ventured to offer my crude sketches to the public.

“I began at last, and wrote several dramas, not one of which any manager would read; but theatrical England at this time was a mere province of France. Observing which, I crept into the theatre at last with a French translation.

“From that I went to better things, and wrote several plays alone, and in conjunction with my friend Mr. T. Taylor; but though my talent, whatever it may be, is rather for the drama than the novel, I was, after a hard fight, literally driven into the novel by bad laws and corrupt practices.

“*Bad laws.*—The international copyright law of 1852 was intended to give a French dramatist the sole right to translate and play his play in England for five years, and so encourage home invention by restraining the former theft. But while the act was being drawn, an English playwright or two, who had all their lives stolen French ideas, and held it a point of honor to die as they had lived, crawled up the back stairs of the House of Commons and earwigged the late Lord Palmerston. He, good man, meant no worse, and saw no deeper, than this: ‘Let us make the best shopkeeper’s bargain we can for England.’ But the result was that the English Sovereign, the English Peers, and the English Commons took their instructions from a handful of impenitent thieves, and disgraced themselves and the nation. They treacherously conveyed into this otherwise noble statute a perfidious clause, allowing ‘fair adaptations and imitations’ of every

foreign drama to be played in England, in defiance of the foreign inventor.

"This viper in the basket made the protecting clauses waste paper, and perpetuated dramatic piracy from foreigners in its old, convenient, and habitual form of colorable piracy.

"After this don't laugh at the words *Perfide Albion*, for these words are true, by God!

"Well, this wicked and perfidious law enabled a portion of the anonymous press to monopolize the theatres, or nearly. No fool can invent a single good drama, but any fool can adapt two hundred good dramas from the French; and any fool can write, just as any fool could spit, the cant and twaddle, and impudence and ignorance that some folk adorn by the acre under the blasphemous title of 'dramatic criticism.'

"So when newspapers increased in number and size, there arose a '*camaraderie*,' or compact band of playwright critics, writers calamitous to the drama, and fatal, above all, to the dramatic inventor. This gang worked in concert as they work to this day; they toadied actors, however wretched; they praised every piece which was written by one of their gang; they flew like hornets at every outsider who did not square them with champagne suppers, or other *douceurs*, pecuniary bribe included; and then, as now, they sometimes levied blackmail on a manager by a dodge I shall expose by and by.

"The managers of theatres, most of them actors, and extremely sensitive to public praise or censure, truckled to these small fry invested with large powers by reckless journals, and would rather take a French piece, sure to be praised by this little Trades' Union, than an English piece, sure to be censured by them.

“I struggled against this double shuffle for about four years, and then I gave it up in despair, and took to novel-writing, against the grain, and left the stage for years.

“During my period of enforced exile from the stage I suffered intellectual hell. I used to go to the theatres and see that one piece of unnatural trash after another could get a hearing, yet the market was hermetically sealed to me. It is usual, under these circumstances, for the disappointed man to turn anonymous writer, call himself a critic, or judge, and, in that sacred character, revenge himself on the successful. Unfortunately, my principles and my reverence for that great, holy, incorruptible science, criticism, did not permit me this Christian solace; so I suffered in silence, and with a fortitude which the writers who babble about my irritability have shown they cannot imitate in a far milder case.

“In 1865 I tried the London stage again under other circumstances, to explain which I must go back a little.

“At Christmas, 1852, Drury Lane was in the hands of a gentleman with great courage and small capital. He invested his all in the pantomime; and the pantomime failed so utterly that after one week they took it off, and pitchforked on to the stage a drama called ‘Gold,’ which I had flung together in the same hasty way. This drama, though loosely constructed, was English, and hit the time. Not being stolen from the French by any member of the trades’ union of playwright critics, it was much dispraised in the papers, and crowded the theatre, and saved the manager.

“Afterwards, when the playwright critics drove me out of the theatre, I was obliged to run cunning, and turned many of my suppressed plays into stories. I dealt so with ‘Gold’: I added a new vein of incidents taken from

prison life, and so turned the drama 'Gold' into the novel—'It is Never Too Late to Mend.'

"But lo! the novel being written by a dramatist, naturally presented fresh dramatic features, and tempted me to reconstruct a more effective drama. I offered it to one or two managers. They declined, and gave their reasons—if I may venture to apply that term to the logic of gorillas.

"Presently piratical scribblers got hold of the subject, and gorilla logic melted away directly in the sunshine of theft. Managers, both in town and country, were ready to treat for the rejected subject the moment it was offered them, not by the inventor and the writer, but by scribblers and pirates. Several piratical versions were played, in town and country, with a success unparalleled in those days. Saloons rose into theatres by my brains, stolen. Managers made at least seventy thousand pounds out of my brains, stolen; but not one would pay the inventor a shilling, nor give his piece a hearing.

"At last this impatient Charles Reade, like his predecessor in impatience, Job, lost impatience, and went to law with the thieves and the dealers in stolen goods.

"It was a long and hard fight that would have worn out a poet or two; but after three suits in the Common Pleas, and three injunctions in Equity, I crushed the thieves, and recovered my property.

"Then I tried the London managers of the day again. I said, 'My amiable, though too larcenous friends, here is an approved subject, which you can no longer steal; but that is your misfortune, not your fault: why not make the best of a bad job, and put a few thousand pounds into your pockets by dealing with the inventor?'

"No; not one would deal with a writer for his own brains.

“Hares run through the woods in tracks; men run through life in grooves; and these had a fixed habit of dealing with scribblers and thieves for the inventor’s brains; and they could not get out of that groove at any price.

“Seven mortal years did I offer my new popular drama, ‘It is Never Too Late to Mend,’ to these bigots in vain.

“Seven mortal years did I see false, un-English, inhuman trash played at the very theatres which refused me a hearing.

“At last a lady interfered, read my drama, and advised Mr. George Vining to entertain it at the Princess’. He did so, and the drama was brought out with great expectation on the fourth day of October, 1865.

“The playwright critics were there in full force, and several of them sat together in the stalls, as usual. But the circumstances under which the play was played were of a nature to disarm hostility. I had not troubled the theatre for ten years; and even now I was only producing, for my own benefit, a play that had been fully discussed, and approved, when played for the benefit of misappropriators.

“It would be hard to find, even amongst the lowest of mankind, a person who could not feel some little compassion for an inventor that had been shouldered off the stage for years by means of his own brains—stolen, and who now merely asked a percentage on his brains, and the same justice which had always been accorded to those brains, when sold for *their own* benefit, by dunces and thieves.

“But, if you want a grain of humanity, or honor, or justice, or manly feeling of any kind, don’t you go to a trades’ union; for you won’t find it there. The play-

wright critics concerted the destruction of the drama on the first night. They were seen to egg on Mr. Tomlins, the critic of *The Morning Advertiser*, to howl down the prison scenes by brute clamor. Tomlins, being drunk, 'his custom ever in the afternoon,' lent himself to this with inebriate zeal, and got up a disturbance, which with a feeble manager would infallibly have ended in the curtain being let down and the play withdrawn forever. But, for once, the clique ran their heads against a man. George Vining defied the cabal on the stage; and, at last, some fellows in the gallery, shaking off their amazement at the misconduct below, called down, 'Turn the blackguards out.' Now when the dishonest blackguards in the stalls found the honest blackguards in the gallery had spotted them, they shut up, and prepared their articles for next morning in dead silence.

"Next day, of course, they wrote the piece down unanimously. But they had overrated their power. The public got scent of the swindle, rushed to the theatre, and carried the drama triumphantly for 148 nights. The profits were about £8000, of which £2000 came to me on shares. The drama has outlived all the plays that were lauded to the skies that year by the venal clique. It was played in six houses this year, 1873.

"Finding themselves sat upon, the playwright critics went and ate dirty pudding; they had been talking about liberty, and trying hard and publicly to get rid of the examiner of plays. Yet they now went to this functionary, cap in hand, and humbly besought him to come to their assistance, and stop Mr. Reade's play, since the 'Press' was powerless. This fractional clique has quite a mania for calling itself the 'Press.' The Licenser received them politely, but with a covert sneer; expressed a respect for

liberty, and objected to interfere with it except in questions of public morality."

To be perfectly frank, admitting that the stalls were by no means crowded with the author's friends, the house itself, as a whole, was hardly favorable to the piled agony of the prison scene. There are facts which, though highly dramatic, had better be left to the imagination. The author had overdone his effect; he had rendered tragedy itself repulsive, if not ridiculous, and when in his cooler moments he consented to tone down barbarity, his play did not lose in real strength.* It has been asserted as incontrovertible that "It is Never Too Late to Mend" failed to win enthusiasm at the outset. This Charles Reade's

* Before the play was produced Charles Reade sent the MS. to his warm friend, Dion Boucicault, at Dublin—for criticism. The reply of the latter was so severe that it was deemed by its recipient worth a niche in his huge letter-book; the envelope containing it bearing the sarcastic inscription, "Boucicault on MS. drama, 'Never Too Late to Mend.' Advises me to cut out Jew and Jacky. Aha! old Fox, they will outlive thee and me!" This is the missive in question:

DUBLIN, 3 Dec.

"MY DEAR READE,—I have read your drama, 'N. T. L. T. M.' There is in it a very effective piece, but, like the nut within both husk and shell, it wants freedom.

"1st. It will act five hours as it stands.

"2d. There are scenes which injure dramatically others which follow.

"3d. There are two characters you are fond of (I suppose), but can never be played. I mean Jacky and the Jew.

"4th. The dialogue wants weeding. It is more in weight than actors—as they breed them now—can carry.

"Total. If you want to make a success with this drama, you must consent to a depleting process—to which Shylock's single lb. of flesh must be a mild transaction.

"Have you the courage to undergo the operation? I'm afraid you have not.

Ever yours,

DION BOUCICAULT."

arithmetic alone goes far towards disproving. "*Sera Nunquam*" not only commanded success, but at once entered into the programme of stock companies; and to this hour if a manager, be he London or provincial, colonial or American, happens to be in difficulties, he falls back on this drama as a sure and certain draw. It became, moreover, from the date of its initial performance at the Princess' Theatre, a second fellowship to its author, a steady source of income. Rarely did a week pass without a check, larger or less, arriving on account of the representations of this play. Now it was from Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, or Leeds; now from Mr. Dampier at Melbourne, or Wagga-wagga; now from the Cape, from Canada, from India.

It won its way, nevertheless, to universal favor by stages, if rapid ones. Two provincial revivals deserve especial mention—at Birmingham and at Liverpool.

The great metropolis of the Midlands welcomed it with a sympathy most creditable to its reputation for progress and humanity. But for the iron men of that iron city the brutal Austin might have done myriads to death within their jail. It was Birmingham, that Birmingham whose religious prophet was the noble Angel James, and whose political mouth-piece was equally honest John Bright, which raised the cry. And when Birmingham utters, the world must perforce listen.

"Painful as the incidents, delineated with so much force, skill, pathos, and dramatic power, are," wrote an able publicist to a Birmingham paper, "they are by no means equal to the stern facts upon which the dramatist has based his tragic scenes. The dismal history was described on our local record, and is probably well-nigh forgotten by those who were living at that time. . . .

“On the 29th October, 1849, the jail (of Birmingham) was opened, Captain Mackonochie being appointed governor. He had been superintendent at Norfolk Island, and introduced ‘the mark system,’ under which no prisoner was *entitled* to any other food than bread and water, but might earn an improved dietary, together with other indulgences and rewards, in proportion to the numbered marks he should obtain. This system the captain desired to introduce into Birmingham jail. . . .

“The beneficial system was not allowed to continue in operation for any length of time. In March, 1850, the office of principal warder became vacant, and Lieutenant Austin was appointed. From the day Austin entered he seems to have aimed at undermining the authority of the governor. Quarrels arose. Austin jesuitically sent in his resignation. It was not accepted, and shortly after Captain M. was deprived of his appointment, . . . and on October 21, 1851, Austin was appointed governor. The humane system and the generally mild treatment to which prisoners had been subjected were superseded by others of harshness and cruelty. Between November, ’51, and April, ’53, there were no less than twelve attempts at suicide, and three in which the unfortunate prisoners succeeded in destroying their lives. A blue book is full of harrowing details, such as make one shudder. Many might be cited, but I shall be able only to find room for one. This is that of the boy Andrews, which serves as the model of ‘Josephs,’ the main difference being that Andrews was driven to suicide, while in the drama the boy Josephs dies in the arms of the chaplain. Edward Andrews, a boy of fifteen years of age, was committed, March 28, 1853, for stealing four pounds of beef, for three months. The chaplain described him as ‘quiet, mild, docile;’ the

governor said he was of a 'sullen and dogged disposition.' On March 30 he was put to work the crank; one of the witnesses deposed that, 'to accomplish the 10,000 revolutions necessary for a day's work, a boy would exert force equal to one fourth of an ordinary draught horse.' He failed to perform his task on the 30th and 31st. *On both these days he was fed on bread and water only, not receiving any food whatever until night!* 'His food seldom exceeded bread and water,' and on April 17 he was put into the punishment jacket, where the arms were crossed on the breast and tied together, motion being impossible. In addition to the jacket a stiff leather stock was fastened tightly round the neck, and the prisoner was strapped in a standing position to the walls of his cell. On the 19th he was again strapped for four hours; on that occasion the chaplain was attracted to his cell by shrieks of 'murder;' on going there he found the poor lad suffering great bodily pain in his arms, chest, and neck, crying and wailing most piteously. The chaplain found that the stock was fastened so tightly that he could not insert his finger between it and the poor boy's neck. On the 22d and 24th he was again strapped. On this occasion a bucket of water was thrown over him, and he was seen standing with one sock and one bare foot on the wet stone floor of his cell. On April 26 and 27 he was deprived of his bed from 5.30 P.M. to 10 P.M. On the evening of the latter day, as the watch was taking the bed to the cell, he found him hanging—dead."

Austin was indicted at Warwick, convicted, and—such is the farce of English justice—sentenced to three months' imprisonment!

"If," concludes the writer, "any one should doubt the abhorrence of Birmingham people to such horrible inhu-

manities, let him witness the performance of the drama. He will then know by the uncontrollable sobs of the audience at the simulated sufferings of the victims, and by the murmurs of execration with which the representative of the wicked governor is greeted, how utterly Birmingham despises wrong-doing and tyranny, and how entirely its people compassionate the victims of cruelty and oppression."

Liverpool was, perhaps, less profoundly stirred than Birmingham, but its splendid amphitheatre was packed to the ceiling. The press, notwithstanding, elected to pose as censor. *The Daily Post*, for instance, considered the play "burdened with a didactic purpose. The presentment of mere physical pain to enforce a specific doctrine, whose soundness is to be determined by the understanding, is alike false in art and false in logic. A clinical lecture may be a very proper means of combating an error of medical practice, but its delivery on the stage, in the presence of a patient carefully simulating the throes of tetanus, would rightly be esteemed horrible in itself, and entirely out of place."

Suffice it that if that was the bright idea of Liverpoolian hypercriticism, it failed to influence Liverpool.*

Did space permit, we should desire much to chronicle the numerous revivals of this celebrated drama in London and the provinces, if, indeed, revival be not a misnomer for that which, in one quarter or another, is perpetually running. We must content ourselves with calling atten-

* Martin Farquhar Tupper—"a man," *selon* Charles Reade, "unreasonably pitched into"—wrote thus: "I desire to congratulate you heartily on having made popular so good and true a *refrain* as 'It is Never Too Late to Mend.' Despair of good is the great and evil antagonist, which, so long as there is Life and Hope, it is worth any MAN'S while to try and conquer. And you possibly may have done more good by your acted morals at the Princess' than many bishops in many cathedrals. *Perge, prosper.*"

tion to a circumstance in connection with it which its author would have been the first to place in bold relief. We refer to the splendid support accorded the dramatist by his leading actors. It would be unfair to Charles Reade to affirm that Mr. Henry Neville created the character of Tom Robinson. He did none the less—all that a consummate actor could do for a consummate author. He gave Tom Robinson flesh and blood, soul and sinew; and when, later in the day, Mr. Charles Warner succeeded to his rôle, he too brought histrionic qualities which entranced Charles Reade. "The dog is so picturesque!" was his terse eulogium of the other Charles.* Nor must we omit Mr. Calhaem, who seemed to have adopted as his ideal the missing link of the nebulous agnostics, and to have called into existence in his proper person that impossible paradox, the fusion of parallel species.

It is strange to reflect that there are Warners and Nevilles and Calhaems unborn; destined, none the less, to speak the words that Charles Reade thought and wrote, and enact the scenes he stage-managed with such rare skill. The curtain will not fall for the last time on thrilling "*Sera Nunquam*" until our English tongue has gone the way of Sanscrit, and the English passion for righteousness has been merged in the lubricity of the wolf and the jackal. And then—if ever that comes—the planet, like other ephemeral things, will no longer be worth preserving.

* The following extract from the author's diary, dated January 18, 1879, exhibits his appreciation of Mr. Charles Warner: "Sinclair (George Fielding) and Rose Leclercq (Susan) do not act up to Warner in Act I. They let the play drop by their sluggishness and want of all genuine excitement in these particular scenes. But of course they appear tamer by the side of the exuberant Warner. However, when a leading performer sets the tune in so bright a key, there is but one way—the others must act up to him, or the whole thing goes to pot, and the audience only attends when the earnest man is on."

CHAPTER XXV.

THREE NOVELS AND THREE PLAYS.

CHARLES READE'S least flattering censors, while generally sparing their praise, have always pointed to one among his works as being in every respect superior to the rest. In "Peg Woffington" he was accused of staginess; in "Christie Johnstone," save the mark, of deficient imagination; in "It is Never Too Late to Mend," and "Hard Cash," of didactic pedantry; in "White Lies," of plagiarism. He was now to produce a novel which should escape these several strictures, yet expose him to assailants of a different kidney and a less critical mettle. The book, in fact, for once satisfied the most exacting among the republic of literati, while it converted into enemies a section of his warmest admirers outside that charmed circle.

We shall perhaps meet the equity of the case in venturing to suggest, that if only the honest objectors to "Griffith Gaunt" on either side the Atlantic could have realized its true purport as clearly as the men of letters gauged its artistic merit, there would have arisen but one chorus, and that of praise. Enough that its author, placed on the defensive, delivered a vehement rejoinder in the *brochure* entitled "The Prurient Prude," which forms one of the more amusing items of "Readiana." Being, as he believed himself to be, free *in foro conscientiæ*, he was quite capable of answering his detractors; and we feel ourselves in

consequence totally relieved from the slightest obligation of constituting ourselves his apologists. He has spoken for himself.

At the same time it is but just to his memory, and, above all, to his fair fame, to place on record what evidence we possess on his side. In handling a problem in morals—the *motif* of this book—a writer lays himself inevitably open to the charge of having drawn a veil which ought never to be lifted. Such would be the impulsive, impatient sentiment of many good men. Yet others, and minds of a more philosophical temperament, would naturally view the author from a different standpoint. Among such, we may mention, with the especial reverence due to a poet, Mr. Edwin Arnold, C.S.I., who wrote thus from the office of *The Daily Telegraph*:

“MY DEAR MR. READE,—I am proud to be summoned by you to stand forward for your admirable book—‘Griffith Gaunt.’ What I wrote—in the notice to which you allude so kindly—is what I think, and what I am ready to repeat anywhere, if my friends here don’t object to the publication of my name. As I confess to my printed opinion, you can subpoena me in spite of them, however. I have been sickened to see and hear the things vented against your noble piece of work; I found in it what, let me say, I always find in you, a sincere and loyal love of that which renders beauty beautiful and manhood best. I found in it Nature, too, who does not read the weekly journals enough to forget why Moses wrote the Decalogue, nor what reason She gave him first of all to do it. I am no novel reader, and in morals they call me a Puritan—but I admire and marvel at your exquisite and most healthy and excellent story, which teaches the force of a true love over an unspiritual temperament, and paints a lady that is indeed every inch a lady. To be brief, I lent the book to my sister when I had read it: and will defend it as an enrichment of the best English literature with hearty good will, at any place and time.

“Yours truly, and, for the book, gratefully,

“EDWIN ARNOLD.

“C. READE, Esq.”

So far as concerned this country the book met with but few outward expressions of disfavor. It may be said, without exaggeration, to have floated *The Argosy*. It stormed the almost impregnable citadel of criticism. In respect of imagination, sustained interest, variety and vigor of incident, and, above all, of situation, it fulfilled all, and more than all, the conditions of an ideal novel. The characters lived and moved, and the dialogue—as might be inferred without the saying—was terse and epigrammatic; perhaps we may add as an additional encomium, rigorously true to nature. No one could grumble except in regard of the *motif*; and, as it happened, the severer censors were found, not in Exeter Hall, but in the United States.

There was a print, affected by Brother Jonathan, bearing the romantic title, *The Round Table*. This organ of moral perfection elected to regard "Griffith Gaunt" as of the nature of a snake in the grass, and said as much, or rather, to be strictly accurate, a good deal more. Charles Reade rejoined with his normal pulverizing fury, and not content with having crushed his butterfly with a brickbat, had recourse to legal proceedings. Here he was less triumphant. In "The States" a verdict is said to depend on your ability to procure a judge, and having secured that vantage, to attract the sympathies of a jury. The former of these requirements could be met by the dodgery of your American legal representative; the latter was a physical impossibility. The equity which decided *the Alabama Claims* against England and our colossal Cockburn, in the teeth of the evidence, may be taken as the measure of jurisprudence which obtains in an inchoate community dominated by democratic license. It was in vain for any limb of the law, be he Cicero or Demosthenes,

to attempt to establish a libel when the plaintiff was a Britisher. The jury could not find directly for the defendants, but they did so in effect by rewarding Charles Reade damages to the extent of six cents.

The author smarted, but shrugged his shoulders. His mind was not cast in the mould which would condemn the cream of a great nation because of the sourness of its skim-milk. We are able to place on record the fact that this verdict, which in his own country would have sent him *in celeres iambos furentem*, never changed his opinion of America and her refined sons and daughters. He was gratified when Americans paid him the compliment of courting his acquaintance. He never lost an opportunity of cultivating American ladies and gentlemen, and of displaying his preference for all things American. When the Harvard crew came over to row against Oxford, he offered them hospitality; and has preserved among his collection of choice letters one from Loring, their stroke. He corresponded with Dr. Russell Lowell, and boasted the acquaintance of Reverdy Johnson, General Sickles, and Artemus Ward. Among his numerous American friends may be especially named his kinsman, General Meredith Read, who represented the United States at the Court of Athens, and Mr. Howse, now the editor of a paper at Yokohama. But for *mal de mer* he would have crossed to the other side; and, once there, might have prolonged his visit almost indefinitely. To this excellent feeling Americans themselves have readily testified—notably Mrs. Fields, wife of the eminent publisher, a lady whose recollections of Charles Reade evince both the quality of genuine friendship and the tenderness of womanhood.

“Griffith Gaunt” was the culminating-point of Charles Reade’s literary career. He had paid his debts, saved a

handsome sum, earned reputation both as a novelist and dramatist, while his Fellowship at Magdalen was now yielding a dividend exceeding £500 a year. He resolved accordingly to provide himself a permanent home; and after some few *contretemps* and changes settled finally at Albert Gate.

His residence has been described by himself in "A Terrible Temptation," and by at least a score of others. It was a Georgian house, facing Sloane Street on the south, and on the north the park. The rooms were cramped, as also the hall and staircase, but he diminished this inconvenience by throwing out a large room at the back—his sanctum. There he wrote and received visitors, at times entertained—this mainly for the delectation of Mrs. Seymour, for he was not convivial and not gregarious—and passed long solitary hours with his menagerie, his dogs, his hares, his gazelle, and other fauna. The old Ipsden craze for killing, the hereditary instinct of a sporting race, quite deserted him. He had learned to reverence the great gift of life, and had he lived longer might have attacked the callous vivisectors, whom he always spoke of with the loathing inspired by supreme blackguardism.

He said afterwards that the years spent at Albert Gate were the happiest of his life. The struggle for existence and fame was over. Mrs. Seymour, who had begun as his literary partner, had grown to be his devoted friend, and it is no reflection on either to admit that they were deeply attached to each other. This lady, who was as sharp as a needle at driving a bargain, in private life seemed possessed by a ceaseless desire to do good. She sent small sums anonymously to struggling curates. She helped largely members of her own profession who chanced to be out of employ or in difficulties. She was a woman of prejudices,

but by no means of narrow sympathies. It would be flattering her memory were we to hint that she possessed the smallest scintilla of that sort of genius which goes to make a good housewife. Most people would have defined the *ménage* at Albert Gate as splendidly uncomfortable; but it happened that Charles Reade was of all human beings both the most untidy and the least observant, so that relatively to his comfort the huggermugger ways of the theatrical lady signified less than little. He lived his own life, and in his own fashion.

His rule was to work from nine to three. Interruptions may have deducted from these six hours an average of two, but when pressed he would work on till four, and not seldom in the evening. At a guess we may put his total of labor at not less than five hours a day, but of this at least one hour was expended in making cuttings from newspapers and magazines for his "invaluable" note-books, as he termed them. *The World* remarked, with singular force, that he labored under the preposterous delusion that he was destitute of imagination. It was this disbelief in himself which caused him to accumulate masses of police evidence, and other material, never, happily for his reputation, to be utilized. The dread of missing some good thing caused him to waste at least three hundred hours per annum on scissors-and-paste work, so that eventually, when he came to catalogue and classify all this congeries of information, the headings alone covered twelve pages of printed matter in double columns. The matter itself was stored in guard-books, and digests, and is mostly of the sort specially adapted to anecdotal journalism—"Tidbits," and the like.

Literature, unlike every other vocation, develops into an ineradicable habit. The schoolmaster, the politician,

the government clerk, soldier, sailor, parson, merchant, doctor, tradesman, and artisan, all crave for their holiday. The writer alone holds by force of habit to the rule, "*Nulla dies sine linea*." We who remember Charles Reade as the man of leisure, whose *ergon* was amusement, can but note the contrast between different periods of his life. It is a fact that he labored most sedulously when labor itself was a matter of option.

At the same time it must be admitted that there were moments when he seemed to require a spur. It was perhaps the languor, after so marked a success as "Griffith Gaunt," that induced him to enter into collaboration with a warm personal friend, whom he esteemed highly as an artist, Mr. Dion Boucicault.

The result was rated by the press as rather *rococo*. "Foul Play" is not merely dramatic, but histrionic, and might appropriately have been termed "The New Robinson Crusoe." It is a capital story, none the less so because it outrages probability; and whatever merit it possesses Charles Reade always readily accorded to his literary colleague. "I agree with you," he says, as though criticising his friend, rather than the book, "'Foul Play' is very sharp and good. It was written on the right system. Boucicault produced the greater part of it in pure dramatic dialogue, which makes an excellent backbone for me." Still, he adds—the book being still in progress—"my work worries and discourages me; but somehow when it comes out in print it seems all right. I am in the vein now."

The press, however, began to laugh. Mr. Burnand parodied the story in *Punch*, under the style of "Chicken-hazard," and Charles Reade writhed under the very good-humored satire. He called it indignantly desecration of a work of art, and could not bring himself to join in the

laugh. In vain did the writer of these lines assure him that chaff is a delicate form of flattery, and that the rollicking fun of "Chicken-hazard" was never intended to detract from his reputation. He was hurt, far more so than when they styled two of his works immoral; and perhaps this feeling was all the more unreasonable because, on the hypothesis that the travestie designed to hold the book up to contempt, the individual actually affected was its originator, Mr. Boucicault, and not its embellisher, Charles Reade.

That, however, was by no means the end of his trouble. *The Pall Mall Gazette* wrote a critique on the serial, suggesting that the story was nothing more than an elaboration of a French play, "La Portfeuille Ruge." This was news. In a letter from the Palatine Hotel, Manchester, he earnestly requests Mrs. Seymour to obtain, without a moment's delay, a copy of the above play, intimating his ignorance of the author. In fine, whether the allegation was verified, or the reverse, Charles Reade was individually innocent of plagiarism.

"Foul Play" was subsequently dramatized—in spite of a hint from a leading actress that "she could not think how they were going to do it"—and its initial performance at Leeds seems to have been very gratifying to Charles Reade. This is his description of the event: "'Foul Play' came out last night. They began, with their usual judgment, half an hour after the time, and the waits between the acts were *longer, by the watch, than the acts*."

"With all these drawbacks it was an undeniable success; and may, I think, work up to a *great* success."

"The best-played parts were Helen, Joe Wylie, and Nancy Rouse. Coleman stronger than anybody in places; but too slow and ponderous. Scenes good as a whole. For once the performance has only suggested *one* cut."

“You will be pleased to hear that the first call was for me. I was rather reluctant to bow, before an actor had received ovation. But Coleman came and made me, and certainly I was never received with the sort of enthusiasm. Some of the men stood up, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs to me all over the house. I thought I was in France.”

In 1868 “Griffith Gaunt,” in a dramatic form, appeared before a Manchester audience with *éclat*; and it remains on record that, had its author returned in 1884 from the south of France to live, instead of to die, his desire was to revive this drama in London under the auspices of Mr. John Coleman. That was not to be; but the fact affords evidence of a firm belief in the dramatic quality of the most intense of all his narratives.

This was followed in the succeeding year by the adaptation of Lord Tennyson’s pathetic idyl “Dora,” for the Adelphi Theatre. The vicissitudes of the drama are proverbial, nevertheless the ill-luck of “Dora” may fairly be styled unique. Never before had a piece been wrecked owing to defective scenic accessories. There is but one fatal step even from the sublimity of our ethereal laureate to the painfully ridiculous, and this was achieved by—to be frank—poor Mrs. Seymour, who, being cockney-bred, could hardly realize the attributes of a cornfield. Suffice it that when the farmer of the play pointed to his acres of golden grain, which consisted of American cloth, the audience was convulsed. “*Risum teneatis, amici?*” was passed from the lips of critic to critic, and “Dora” collapsed.

It was a bitter pill for Charles Reade. He had not been accustomed to failure, and moreover had lavished labor to render his adaptation worthy of the immortal poet whose

theme he availed himself of. He registered then and there a vow that some day he would give the drama a second chance, and he kept it.

In 1870 his good friend, Mr. Smith, offered him a place in the *Cornhill Magazine*, and he felt in consequence put on his mettle to produce another *magnum opus*, the parallel, if so it might be, of "*Sera Nunquam*." During the progress of "A Good Fight"—about the year 1859—a lady in indigent circumstances, residing then at Sheffield, had appealed to him for aid, and not in vain. He begged her in return to furnish him with all the material she could obtain relative to the action of the trades' unions in terrorizing workmen. She replied that she could glean no facts whatsoever, and this, strange to say, though she was offered a handsome rate of pay, and was also in wretched circumstances. Charles Reade let her down with the epithet "idiot," and turned to other sources for the information he sought. Probably, from 1859 to 1869, he had been steadily collecting material for the book he was about to write. Anyhow, recent events helped him, and he had but to make some personal investigations in order to possess the framework of a strong story.

He did so. What is more, he might have regretted his ambition *tractare serpentes*, since, in plain English, he risked his life. The assassins were so infuriated by his picture of themselves and their dark deeds, that they actually proposed to add him to the number of their victims, and sent him formal notice to that effect. Whether they thought better of it, or whether as they read on they perceived that the author was no more a friend of the tyranny of capital than of the tyranny of labor, and so had the wit to avoid striking a friend in mistake for a foe, we know not. Suffice it that the *brutum fulmen* did no more evil than cause

a brave and honest soul many sleepless nights, and also exacerbate his whole nature against the *proletariate*.

"What," cried he to his niece, "do you believe in the workingmen?"

"Don't you?" was the halting inquiry of the lady.

"Nasty beasts!" was the scornful rejoinder.

It was their own fault. In his passion for justice, for equal laws, and equal rights, Charles Reade was a democrat. But he was also a gentleman *pur sang*, and when blackguardism proposed to have his blood for no other reason than because he had borne testimony on behalf of righteousness, he turned against it, as against a reptile whose heart was as black as its hands.

Yet he went down to Sheffield, and other manufacturing centres, with a mind impartial and open to conviction. He did not hesitate to fix blame on the masters where he deemed it due; and he expected that either side would recognize the judicial attitude of a writer who had as little liking for the brutality of plutocracy as for the brutality of rattening. To demonstrate that he was actually on the spot itself, we append quotations from two letters:

First from 4 Handsfield Road, Sheffield:

"I saw Broadhead yesterday, and indeed was in his bar-parlor for nearly an hour. Noted his head, face, conversation; but of course we never touched the particular subject in which he is distinguished."

Secondly, from 332 Oxford Road, Manchester:

"Your letter was a great relief to me. Thank goodness, that Irish fiend" (a bibulous cook; Mrs. Seymour had a *penchant* for Irish servants) "is out, and a Saxon in.

"Yesterday I received several men who had been beaten, injured, shot by the Unions; and in the evening a detective, the richest fellow in the world. Oh, for a short-

hand writer, to record the things I heard. Seriously, were I Dickens, it would pay me well to take a shorthand writer everywhere. I am getting anecdotes and racy dicta.

"But the worst is, I don't succeed in finding Thomas Wilde, which was my great object in coming here. Of course I shall stick to it till the last; but I cannot consent to spend another week in Manchester, a place I hate. I would rather go, and come back to it when Wilde is found. How I wished you had been with me yesterday—what a chapter of experiences it was!"

Shortly after the story had got under way in the *Cornhill*, Charles Reade seems to have invited his dear friend Wilkie Collins's criticism. If it were not heresy, we should almost be tempted to hint that he revered the plot-weaver of intricate texture as profoundly as Dickens, the incomparable humorist. This would hardly be correct, yet it may not be impertinent to add that whereas he and Dickens were on terms of friendship, his friendship with Wilkie Collins had ripened into intimacy. "Go at once and see him," he on one occasion wrote peremptorily to Mrs. Seymour, on hearing of his friend's illness, "in bed or out of bed."

Mr. Wilkie Collins's reply to Charles Reade was as follows:

"CONSIDERATIONS FOR R."

"I start from the December number—and I say the interest in the character is so strong, the collision of human passions is so admirably and so subtly struck out, that the public will have no more of new trades' unions and their outrages. They will skip pages 3, 4, 5, in the November number—they will resent the return to the subject in the December number. I don't suggest alteration of these.

I only say what I say as a warning for the future. Keep to the cutlers, and keep the cutlers mixed up with Henry Coventry, Grace and Jael, and you are safe.

“Now, as to the brickmakers, I have read the report. They are even worse than the cutlers. But, as an artist and a just man, you don’t take the worst case for illustration. You take the medium case, which may apply generally to all tradés’ unions.

“If *I* had the story to finish, I should make the capitalist’s difficulty in setting-up the buildings for working Henry’s invention arise from his knowledge of what the brickmakers will certainly do. I should make him put this forcibly in dialogue with Henry—and I should make Henry feel, *exactly what the reader will feel*, immeasurable disgust at this repetition of tyranny, outrage, and murder. ‘What! am I to go through it all again with the brickmakers? *More* conspiracies, explosions, mutilations, and deaths?’ ‘That’s the prospect, Mr. Little!’ ‘Am *I* to give up my inventions; and are *you* to give up your profits?’ ‘No; we are to look out for a ready-made article in the shape of an empty building which will suit us—and give the brickmakers the go-by in that way.’

“The building is formed, as in your plot—and there are the brickmakers, just touched and dismissed, and the story running on again, with the selling-up of the saw-grinding machinery, and all the incidents which follow, with this additional advantage, that Henry does not do over again with the brickmakers what he has already done with the cutlers.

“As to other points: 1. Hurry the story (if possible) to Henry’s proposal to Grace to marry him, and go away with him, and to Grace’s refusal. You want that strong point, and that definite result, after keeping the suspended

interest so long vibrating backwards and forwards between Grace's two lovers.

"2. I doubt a *second* blowing-up with gunpowder. Can the necessary results be arrived at in no other way? Can it not be done by a pre-arranged escape of gas, for instance? Or by some other explosive or destructive agent?

"Query?

"This so far is no doubt already in your plan—Mr. Raby having alluded to restoring the desecrated building.

"The scenes in the ruined church are so admirable and original that I want the church to play an important part in the story. Would it be possible to make Mr. Raby repair and reconsecrate it for public worship? Then to make the marriage of Grace and Coventry take place in it? And then to have the marriage invalidated by some informality in the consecration, or in the registration for marriages, of the newly-restored church?

"I don't know whether such an event as this would be legally possible; or whether, if it *could* be possible, you could harmonize my idea with your notion of the uncertificated clergyman?

"But it seems to me a good point to make the old church in which Henry has worked and suffered for Grace the retributive agent in defeating Coventry, and uniting Henry to the woman whom he loves.

"The *first* marriage celebrated in the church might be the marriage of Coventry and Grace, and so all difficulty about the marriages of other couples might be avoided.

"Or, perhaps, you already mean to end the story with the marriage of Henry and Grace in the restored old church? Anyhow I, as reader, certify the church to be 'an interesting character.'"

The whole of this is pasted in Charles Reade's volume of invaluable letters, with the aside, "These are remarks

by my friend Wilkie, made at the 10th, or December No. of my story, 'Put Yourself in His Place,' then running in the *Cornhill Magazine*. I was so fortunate as to please him at last."

The curious reader is invited to take up the book from the point named, and contrast the actual elaboration of the plot with that here suggested by Mr. Wilkie Collins. It seems almost unfortunate that the two masters of fiction did not lay their heads together and work it out—this without disrespect to the actual author, who certainly kept the interest alive up to the last page.

Following the precedent of "Foul Play," Charles Reade dramatized his novel promptly. It was a genuine drama, and yet he complained, almost peevishly, as he labored upon it in his college rooms, that it did not dramatize easily. It was a doctrine of his, that to write a novel may be possible for any one of average intelligence and some artistic invention, whereas to write a play—that would play—was an evidence of genius, not perhaps inevitably of the highest order, but always of a quality transcending mere talent. Pushed to its logical conclusion, his theory would have reacted rather unpleasantly on himself; enough that, like ambidexterity, it was one among the many paradoxes he cherished as axioms.

Under the title "Free Labor," the play made its appearance on May 30, 1870, *before* the story had run its course in the *Cornhill Magazine*. *The Times* commenced a sympathetic notice with the somewhat startling compliment: "Mr. Reade is as clever as he is crotchety." That was perhaps rather irrelevant, a text hardly appropriate to Jupiter's homily. As a matter of fact, Mr. Reade produced his play in a theatre consecrated to melodrama of the most realistic type, and he did so with genuine stage

effects. Jupiter itself was obliged to admit that Mr. Henry Neville, who played the part of Harry Little with characteristic force and finish, did "actually forge *real* edge tools, on a *real* anvil, with a *real* hammer—and uncommonly well." The burden of the piece fell entirely on this one actor, whose genius really saved it from failure. It was not destined to lasting popularity in the metropolis, but succeeded better with provincial audiences, and especially in Birmingham and Sheffield, where the theme was sufficiently familiar.

The subjoined pair of *billets doux* were preserved by Charles Reade among his literary curiosities :

"25th May, 1870.

"B. WEBSTER, Esq. :

"Sir,—You are about to produce, at the Royal Adelphi Theatre, Mr. Reade's novel of 'Put Yourself in His Place,' under the name of 'Free Labor.' Mr. Reade's novel is a gross outrage on trades' unions. He knows no more about trades' unions than he does about the patent office, which he attempts to describe in his work. I have every reason to believe that the play will be cried down on the first night of its representation.

I am, sir, yours obedient,

"AN AMALGAMATED ENGINEER."

"DEAR SIR,—'Truth copies fiction of a certain order.' With regard to your bill with the above heading, I heard it asserted by a printer (who has what is called an 'Open House,' *i. e.*, employs both unionists and non-unionists) that the recent outrage, reported in *The Echo*, was the result of what had been seen on the Adelphi stage. I think you ought to hear these things, because it shows the perversity of people.

G. H. G."

We cannot conclude this chapter better than by appending the *verba verberima* of the leading actor, whose acknowledgment of a keepsake presented him by the dramatist he had served so well will strike most minds, as it strikes us, as being indicative of a warmth of heart which perhaps may go far towards accounting for the prolonged success of his histrionic career.

"OLYMPIC THEATRE, June 6, 1871.

"MY VERY DEAR READE,—I have no words hearty enough to express my delight and gratitude for the splendid compliment you have been good enough to pay me. I am overwhelmed—I don't know what to say—thanks are commonplace, and my heart is boiling over with gushing sentiments, which perhaps would not look well on paper, and could but feebly express my *true* feelings. I am *proud* indeed, and shall ever be, of your *noble* present, and *flattering* inscription. The association of my name with yours is one of the most gratifying circumstances of my life. I have always had intense admiration for you—true friend, noble, kind-hearted gentleman—with words of fire for all things false and base. Believe me, your kindness is thoroughly appreciated—and with my heart's best thanks, I am always,

Yours faithfully,

"HENRY G. NEVILLE."

The writer will, we sincerely trust, pardon the inclusion of this letter among others that embellish our pages. It was one which the recipient valued so highly that he preserved, not merely the letter itself, but—as he did in the case of Charles Dickens—the envelope also. This tribute was not, we may add, presented especially on account of Mr. Neville's impersonation of Harry Little, but rather because of a close association with other leading characters, such as Tom Robinson and Robert Penfold, where the author was deeply indebted to the actor. We have ventured to print it, because it bears testimony, in simple yet ardent language, to the exalted motives which invariably actuated Charles Reade, and ever raised him far above the level of theatrical money-grubbers.

"If," said our author on one occasion to a querulous manager, "you had wished for a play to please the public, you should not have asked me to write for you"—in other words he never deviated from his sense of art and right to court a cheer. Let us say, in Mr. Neville's own speaking language, his pen issued "words of fire for all things false and base."

CHAPTER XXVI.

IDEAL JOURNALISM.

THREE novels dealing with social topics had already invested their author with a new character. He was an artist, perhaps primarily so, for, unlike Disraeli, he did not utilize fiction as a medium for promulgating political doctrine. But he was also stamped as a social reformer of the most thorough sort, and people with a grievance sought him out from all quarters. He had set a very big ball rolling—should he follow it up?

He thought seriously of so doing, in his own fashion of course, for he was nothing if not individual. To this end he proposed to run a magazine, which should comprise with the solidity of the "Nineteenth Century," "Contemporary," and "Fortnightly," something of the slaughtering quality of Mr. Labouchere's "Truth"; but to be rigidly non-political. The project never assumed a concrete form. He discovered that to float a magazine costs several thousand pounds, all of which may be lost, should either the public or the advertisers disapprove. Mrs. Seymour at his elbow cautioned him. Inclination, moreover, prompted him rather to lose on his plays than on social idiosyncrasies. Hence the nebular magazine began and ended with a prologue, which, as reflecting the mind of its author, *de omnibus reipublicæ rebus*, we append.

It is headed—

"THE SITUATION.

"The nation is improving, on the whole, in goodness, wisdom, and wealth. Free trade prevails, and England, following tardily the wisdom of Prussia, at last compels low parents to educate their children.

"Drink still ruins the lower orders, and legislators have not the courage to quench it in earnest, or perhaps cannot afford to quench it.

"Taxation is crushing, and in some few cases unjust; in others, what sticks to the collector's fingers is so great, and what reaches the public coffers so small, that the tax becomes bad State economy.

"In Parliamentary elections we have given perjury and rotten eggs trial upon trial; and at last we are sick of them. The tardiest begin to see that anything may be better, and nothing can be worse, than wholesale perjury, bribery, and riot: so *à priori* reasoning gives way to experience, and the ballot is to have a trial. As no nation has ever given it up after trial, no more will England.

"There is more active religion than ever, and more respectable infidelity. The religious repeat numerous prayers in public, but as regards their fellow-men seldom act up to their tenets: nor the infidels down to theirs, but only talk one's hair on end. Some learned divines hover between the two camps: the right Reverend Father in God, Cocker, whose teeth are longer than Spinoso's, has gnawed away the details of the Pentateuch; the Oxford doctors have nibbled away a good slice of the New Testament. The learned Renan has outdone Socinus; for he has proved Jesus Christ a *Frenchman*: and that causes a reaction in sturdy Anglo-Saxons, me included.

"The Sovereign has abdicated her highest prerogative;

she no longer signs death-warrants: a subject decides whether his fellow-subject is to live or die, which is unconstitutional. So long as the monarchy exists it is the law of England that no head shall fall but under the sign manual of the Sovereign—*Blackstone*.

“This is the Sovereign’s privilege, but the subject’s right; to rob him of it is to abolish monarchy. Consequently, every man who has been hanged of late in England has been killed unconstitutionally—in a word, more or less lynched.

“These excusable homicides are now done privately. Certain shallow men urged on the State the scandal of a public execution, and criminals are now hanged cannily in a corner, without the Queen’s sign manual.

“The deliberate slaughter in cold blood, even of a murderer, can be justified on two grounds combined: retributive justice and public terror. This is the only sound theory of capital punishment. But subtract publicity, and the act is lowered to clandestine vengeance. Intelligent men, who have seen these justifiable homicides, come away shuddering, and saying to themselves, ‘We have seen a man’s life stolen secretly.’

“Our judges, the mouthpieces of law—are still chosen from a band of outlaws—highly respectable ones of course; but so long as a client can, by law, defraud counsel of his fee for service, if he does not take it in advance, and counsel can, by law, take the fee, yet cheat the client out of his services, counsel are outlaws.

“This anomaly of law actually leads to frauds upon the suitor by distinguished counsel on their road to the judgment-seat. The fraud is perpetrated by the influence of the lawyers, because it does not work evenly; the suitor cannot actually defraud them, and they can and do de-

fraud the suitor. The English public is mad to allow this Roman fraud to live in the temple of English law and justice.

“For three mortal months in the year justice is suspended for the convenience of a clique—justice, which is the breath of every nation’s nostrils. The poor silly nation submits to this. Perhaps if, instead of the Long Vacation, it was called ‘The Suspension of Justice,’ we should not put up with so great an injury, so impudent and ungrateful an insult.

“In the general practice of our law courts much reform has been effected; but not half enough. The law reformers have been lawyers; and no clique, however well disposed, can see one half its own abuses—prejudice and precedent are too strong. Intelligent laymen must also take the broom, or the Augean stable will never be swept. The suitor is too much oppressed and pillaged in our courts; and the whole legal clique is given to forget that he is the representative in their courts of that great and generous public which supports the whole system of judicature, and pays the judges their princely salaries, and pays those who appoint the judges.

“Legislation—the peers seem to be gradually retiring from it. This is a pity. The House of Commons is an arena of political strife; and quiet salutary measures are not so welcome there as noisier measures; but, as regards the true welfare of the whole nation, a measure about which the great parties fight with a view to office, is often a clique business, and a smaller national measure than one which evaporates for want of piquancy, or is refused a hearing for years, and then passed through pure apathy, not appreciation. I may, therefore, in these pages invite the peers to consider great but peaceful measures, beneficial, not to party, but only to mankind.

“Many wise laws have passed, and will ; a few great defects and errors remain to be corrected. The most flagrant that occur to me all in a moment are :

“1. The want of a sufficient law to detect and punish with fine and imprisonment the adulteration of milk, and the mere diluting of milk. It is an Herodian crime. Indeed, it is wholesale slaughter of the community; for the community is principally composed of children, and true milk is their life, watered milk their death. France has for many years detected this crime by science, and punished it by imprisonment ; we do neither, and more fools we ! Adulteration ought to be attacked with more rigor ; something has been done, but not enough.

“2. The difficulty of ejecting house-tenants who will neither pay nor go is monstrous. Such a tenant is a malefactor, and the legislature has not observed it. If such a malefactor holds a tenement worth only £20 a year, the man he is robbing of the property can go to a police court, and kick the robber out ; but if the property is worth £300 a year, then there is no remedy for the victim but the slow and costly process of ejectment, with loss of law costs and six months' rent. In other words, the legislature has looked through a microscope, and seen a small wrong to clear property bigger than a great wrong. Where a little indisputable property is concerned, it sees the real sanctity of property. Where a large indisputable property is concerned, it forgets the real sanctity of property, and glues its eyes on the sanctity of possession, which is a pure illusion ; and the larger the property the more disastrous the illusion.

“We still hold to our *PENINSULAR MANIA*.

“In any part of Europe, except England proper from the Tweed to Lizard Point, if a man and woman, through

pure frailty, or temporary bars to marriage, cohabit and have children, but afterwards repent and marry, their children become legitimate. But here, in this little peninsula, crammed with lawyers, but bare of jurists, the parents can repent, and legitimatize themselves, the sinners, but not their children. These last are still picked out and punished without remorse, yet they are the parties who never sinned at all. This peninsular mania will be exposed in these pages by one who has no personal interest in the question, but is justly ashamed of his peninsula, and not to be humbugged by the cant of King John's barons, nor Queen Victoria's bombastical pettifoggers.

"The wrongs of authors are still bitter, and a disgrace to the legislature.

"Muddleheads still call copyright a monopoly; and cannot, or will not, see it is intellectual property, and has nothing whatever in common with monopoly; and this fatal misuse of language is a main source of the foul injustice to authors at home and abroad. Acting on this fallacy, the government of 1847 committed one of the most barbarous acts of spoliation and tyranny that ever disgraced the legislature of any country in modern times. It actually pillaged English authors, without warning, of their colonial property. It had no more right to rob us of that property than to take our coats off our backs the moment we land in Quebec.

"Street houses are still a gigantic blunder: they are built with irrational roofs, inaccessible roofs, combustible staircases on the top floor, doors and windows square and hideous, instead of arched and beautiful, plaster ceilings, hidden drains, stifling rooms, deadly cold passages, etc. They are fire-traps, dens of smoke and effluvia; they are chronic swindles, for they are so built, piped, glazed, and

painted that they must be a constant expense to the holder, and a milch cow to the builder. Buy any other new thing, and you get rid of the maker; but buy a new house, and you must be always sending for him to grope for his hidden work, and patch his bad work, and clean his abominable casements, and repaint God Almighty's beautiful woods, to paint which woods at all is but to defile them. (See my letters to the *Pall Mall Gazette*.)

"The Fine Arts.—England is the paradise of painters. They are honored more than the artists of the pen. They are paid a great deal more than they are worth, measured by European pictures and prices; but long live these insular and amazing prices, for the painters gain and the nation too. High prices encourage long labor and produce better pictures than low prices do; and good pictures are a national treasure: they cost the nation nothing; for the purchase money stays at home, and they will be one day exported to the colonies, and bring specie in, though they never took specie out.

"These artists have a double market, the picture and the copyright.

"They are allowed to charge the public a shilling a head for entering their great shop, though the public built it for them, and by entering buy a hundred pictures that otherwise might not be sold or not so well sold. This is without a parallel in Europe.

"Music is highly rewarded in the persons of many singers and a few fiddlers; but the higher artist, the composer, is vilely paid. To sweeten his substantial wrongs, he is petted by the women, including Her Gracious Majesty, who knights him promiscuously. Like the dramatist, his invention is discouraged by the competition of the stolen music; and this fraud on the foreigner, and discouragement to the na-

tive composer, especially of opera, is the sure fruit of a foul and perfidious clause England, to her deep dishonor, smuggled into the International Copyright Act of 1851. This piece of national folly, and base treachery, was dictated by a playwright or two, who crawled up the backstairs of the House of Commons and earwigged the late Lord Palmerston; it offers a premium, not only on the theft, but on the adulteration of foreign musical compositions. Barbarity added to crime! (See my evidence in the Parliamentary Commission, and my fruitless appeal to the honor of the House of Lords—‘The Eighth Commandment.’)

“The fine art of writing is not honored as it deserves, and as it is honored in more refined nations.

“Though it is the highest of all the arts, and gains an Englishman the most honor abroad, it is slighted at home by Queen, Lords, and Commons, who, moreover, in this do but echo the brutality of the nation. Of all those gentlemen who sit in the House of Peers, few deserve to sit there better than the late Charles Dickens did. Decompose the House, and you resolve it into a few truly noble names; but the bulk is nothing of that sort: sons, or grandsons, of plebeians who rose to be judges and peers, but rarely to be jurists; the sons, or grandsons, of commonplace men, who got into the Commons by bribing small towns, and sticking to a minister right or wrong. A few old nobles, descended from gallant soldiers; others, like the bold Buccleuch, and the canny Cawmil, descended from robbers and murderers who, we know, deserved the roadside gibbet, but got their neighbors’ lands and the peerage instead. Yet this miscellaneous company, into which a banker was lately drafted, simply and solely for having a lot of money, was too divine an assemblage for Charles Dickens to enter!

He was the greatest genius of the century, the greatest benefactor of his country, the great apostle of sympathy. He found classes glowing with antipathy to each other, and infused a little of his own boundless charity into them. Twenty years before he died the highest honors of the State were his mere due—yet they were never offered him; and the nation, whose darling he was, was insulted by this act, the child of blind cliquism and a sordid, narrow, hog-gish, and, above all, snobbish estimate of public merit and true glory.

“But this is only a part of a false and porcine estimate. Look into the fine arts themselves, and you will find they are publicly honored here in strict proportion to their brainlessness.

“The highest title our backward Anglo-Saxon concedes to any fine art is Knighthood. Now music is the one art that demands little or no brains; indeed, it is often connected with downright and proverbial silliness; so knighthood is showered on it. Third-rate composers and second-rate organists—Knighted!

“To paint well, requires mind; so fewer good painters are knighted than mediocre musicians.

“To write poetry, philosophy, narrative, fiction, dramatic fiction, immortal history, incorruptible criticism, requires a larger mind and higher soul than to paint well; so knighthood never comes at all to those diviner arts.

“In other words, where the fine arts are concerned, sensuality, and not mind, distributes the paltry honors of the State, with the discriminating soul that belongs to the Anglo-Saxon hog, young as yet in this branch of civilization.

“A Republic has been openly hinted at as sure to come soon or late, and *The Times* has paved the way for un-

prejudiced discussion by printing a letter of Mr. Potter's. A few years ago Potter and his editor would have been indicted for sedition.

"But the feeling of the nation does not run straight that way. Even if it should, the House of Brunswick need not fear; it has its musicians and painters bound by gratitude to defend it; and so supported it will not expect nor need, when the 'pinch' comes, any champion so mean and feeble as the Pen.

"But, to tell the truth, our immediate danger is from what I call A DIRTY OLIGARCHY, *i. e.*, a set of associated mechanics, who regulate their own numbers by terrorism, and so secure a monopoly, and then abuse that monopoly.

"Mr. Potter may prate about a republic, but his lambs are stiff oligarchists; they are also bloody, crafty, cowardly, remorseless tyrants, compared with whom emperors and Cæsars are just and humane, and don't smell.

"The House of Commons, for obvious reasons, defers to this odoriferous oligarchy steeped in innocent blood; the peers are asleep in *re*, or do not comprehend that there can be an unwashed oligarchy as brutal, barbarous, and dangerous to the nation as they themselves are charming, inoffensive, and clean; and so this odoriferous oligarchy bids fair to oppress talent and enterprise, drive much productive kind of capital out of the country, and clip the wings of labor down to eight hours a day; finely, we shall then compete in manufacture with nations working ten hours a day, and not too drunk to work at all on Monday. Give the second horse ten seconds start for the Derby; what does it matter? it is only ten seconds.

"This dirty oligarchy, and not a republic, is England's rock ahead.

"In matters international, nations, led by us, have done

a great stroke of wisdom. Many years ago we made good old Chaucer's prophecy without exactly intending it, and the world has learned a great lesson: it sees that one nation works best in glass, another in silk, another in wood, another in gold, another in wool and iron, and so on; and no nation is superior in many things. Thus national vanity—the silliest of all vanities—is corrected, and talent interchanged, and nations can easily profit by each other.

“But a greater and harder lesson remains to be taught systematically. The wisdom of the mind is also distributed among nations as equally as mechanical skill: no nation realizes this; yet it is so; and would be seen in an hour if the wisest laws and the wisest customs of each nation could only be brought into one building, and presented to the senses. That unfortunately cannot be. This impalpable wisdom can only be shown on paper, and not vividly like the national products of industry. Yet, here a periodical will rise above all books, and be a small Crystal Palace of ideas: if lovers of mankind will co-operate with me, and, striving nobly against blinding prejudices, will rise to the occasion, weigh the bits of superior wisdom they have seen in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, and bring them to a focus in these pages. My own reading in this kind has been long and large; but no man's private stores can build so great a work—a work which, if it prospers, will promote the interchange of that wisdom which is above rubies; will tend towards that world-wide, blessed uniformity of laws in civilized nations, and that great, but, alas, too distant good, the unity of nations.

“A few superior women are pushing themselves into medicine, and have all my sympathy. Others are talking well, but talking only, and blaming men too much, women too little. But it is childish to sit still and howl at men

because they are better educated. Are men educated by God? Are women educated by men? Man is a slightly superior animal, educated by a slightly superior animal. Woman is a somewhat inferior animal, educated by a somewhat inferior animal. This is the double obstacle to their competition. Let women, then, who are truly ambitious for their sex, leave baying the moon and lay the first stone; let them begin to raise the young and their sex by rational education. At present female education is the blind leading the blind: women forget that in many essential things they are savages compared with men, and that before they can run on all four legs in our race-course they must first walk with all those four legs into the pale of civilization, as we have.

“To touch on those narrower subjects which may be expected of me:

“I find that Literature, directly or indirectly, owes its sad degradation in England to an excess of anonymous writing; one branch is directly degraded by it, and from a great height. I mean the branch which is blasphemously miscalled ‘criticism.’ I find that anonymous criticasters are often corruptible and scarcely ever scientific in their judgments. There is scarcely a writer in the island whose name signed at the bottom of his critique would not rather weaken than strengthen its authority; and this is a terrible phenomenon in any art or science. It arises partly from the want of scientific principles, and still more from the excess of the anonymous. In France this deplorable phenomenon does not exist. The anonymous criticaster is deprived of those two great guides, without which no *class* of men ever yet went straight—reward and punishment: he is neither punished for dishonesty and blunders, nor rewarded for purity and infallibility. The result is

inevitable, since all classes of men are what circumstances make them. We have a shoal of criticasters with little moral and no intellectual principle; they admire in the dead what they dispraise in the living; admire in a Frenchman what they dispraise in an Englishman; approve in their friends what they condemn in their enemies; labor to say smart things, but not to say true things; and are as often wrong as right in their judgment of any new work. This need not be. Literary judgments might be as pure and as accurate as the decisions of the judges in our courts at Westminster. But this will never be until a few able literary judges sit habitually in daylight, like the judges at Westminster; and, like those judges, cultivate accuracy, apply precedents fairly to new-born works, and go by evidence, not conjecture.

“Criticism is a science that does not exist in *esse*, but it does exist in *posse*; and I propose to lay the first stone of that science in these pages.

“The feats of that science, which at present only exists in fitful flashes, are not eloquent phrases, nor flippant sneers, nor even witty periods, but *judgments on new-born works, which judgments time confirms*.

“International copyright is just and needed to raise the literary character. Any class to be respectable must be well-to-do. No class, except ministers of religion, can be poor and noble. A class without property is a tribe of Bohemians. Copyright is the authors' property; it gives them a stake in the country; and international copyright gives them a stake in other countries, and interests them in keeping the peace. Now anonymous writers in this respect have an interest opposed to that of mankind. They are always tempted to set nations by the ears, because they are propertyless Bohemians and penmen who fatten on war.

“I shall fight tooth and nail for international copyright and stage-right, and under these heads correct the strange delusions of English legislators and the English public.

“This little enumeration of things that might be better will, I hope, excuse me for intruding a new periodical into so great a crowd.

“However, I shall not be too hard on the public, nor run by excess of public virtue into the Bankruptcy Court. I know the public taste: it is for exciting and amusing lies, not for truth, justice, and European wisdom. Well, let us compound. I will give you a reasonable dose of lies; only when you have drunk them with the eagerness they do not deserve, come, pray, sip the nobler elixir that is to do you good.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

WISDOM AND FOLLY.

“Put Yourself in His Place” was Charles Reade’s last great novel. Already he had wearied of dramatic narration, and his whole mind seemed focussed on the theatre. His dramas were being played with varying success in the provinces—mostly at his own risk; and the excitement of theatrical speculation seemed to possess a fatal fascination for him.

It happened, however, that Messrs. Cassell required a serial for their magazine, and the terms they offered attracted him. At the moment their editorial department was being supervised by the Rev. Teignmouth Shore, since then one of the Queen’s chaplains, and Mr. John Williams, a former scholar of Trinity College, Oxford, and a first-class man. The Fellow of Magdalen was much gratified to find the literary management of a great firm in such capable and appreciative hands; and so highly did he esteem Mr. Teignmouth Shore that he preserved a complimentary letter of that gentleman, whereunto he appended the following remarks:

“Rev. T. Shore. Editor of Cassell’s, 1871. This truly amiable and intelligent gentleman is Cassell’s head editor at a liberal salary; and I believe the firm has never regretted the unusual step of making a gentleman controller of their business. Certainly under his rule the firm has made great advances.”

That any novel-writer should have hit on such a theme as that which forms the backbone of "A Terrible Temptation," and have utilized for its development the columns of a magazine supposed to be largely supported by the simple puritanism of England—this indeed beggars belief. Yet so it was; and the author himself seems to have been at the outset dubious of so perverse an experiment.

Under date Monday, October 30th, 1870, he writes: "I have lately signed with Cassell, and am languidly working on a weekly serial. Have written one number. Rather smart, I think, but also rather loose. I fear it will offend the mothers of families. Indeed, query will Cassell publish it?"

"Yet, is it really wrong to tell the truth soberly?—viz.: that young men of fortune have all mistresses; and that these are not romantic creatures, but only low, uncultivated women bedizened in fashionable clothes?"

The book has a value of its own, in that it gives the portrait of the author painted by his own hand, and by no means in flattering colors; also, a descriptive account of the same author's sanctum, together with a close analysis of his method of working. The above extract from his diary shows that in intention he was far from being sinister; nevertheless, *littera scripta manet*, and he puts a powerful handle into the grasp of his enemies, while his friends were taken aback. It was hoped that the man whose life had been threatened by the Sheffield ratteners; the author whose grip of social problems was as firm as that of a Roebuck or a John Bright, might have taken his place among the practical social reformers of a reforming age. A great statesman was reported to have thrown down the book with the angry criticism: "He has wrecked a

reputation." The firm of Cassell, Petter, & Galpin felt chagrined, and said as much. The wolves and jackals of the press fell upon him with ferocity. He rewrote, under pressure, a portion of the serial while yet it was running through the pages of Cassell's magazine. Love, reverence, gratitude cannot induce us to offer a fuller apology for this, the one real blunder of the author's beneficent career, than that which is implied in his own words—he meant well.

He suffered for his indiscretion, moreover, in pocket as well as otherwise. These are his reflections :

"A successful author ! My story, 'A Terrible Temptation,' declined by all the publishers I offered it to. Smith, with compliments, says he is *afraid* to publish it.

"Chapman, who was hot on it, now says nothing. He, or his wife, have read it.

"I foresee that the librarians will all band against it, as usual ; and at fifty-seven years of age, plenty of hot water coming. Well, it is one more fight ; that is all, for fight I must, or be crushed entirely. And this is what they call a lucky writer !"

The next sentence, and those following, betray symptoms of penitence :

"Letter to Coleridge, Solicitor-General, reminding him of the promise I made to expunge an intemperate passage in 'It is Never Too Late to Mend,' and sending him copy of the amended book.

"I have actually forgotten whether this, or July 16th, was dear Julia's birthday. Ah, sweet saint ! I hope you don't see me, my follies and— ! Here is a horrible wish ; so much for not being a Christian.

"I am depressed by my inability to find a subject that interests me to write on."

Our American cousins, whose propriety had been shocked

by "Griffith Gaunt," went simply frantie over "A Terrible Temptation." Across the Atlantic they have a habit of styling a spade a powerfully-epitheted agricultural implement, and Charles Reade was by no means let down gently. He got his deserts, and something also by way of compound interest. For example, the *Philadelphia Telegraph* declared "that 'A Terrible Temptation' was written in Mr. Reade's most slang-whanging style." The *New York Sun* called it "a piece of carrion literature, whose putrescence attracted the keen scent of the publishers, and whose sickening odors, thanks to their enterprise, now pervades the land." The *Utica Morning Herald* began by dubbing Charles Reade "King among all living novelists," and proceeded promptly to preach revolution on the ground that the king had erred. Nevertheless, it cannot bring itself to be totally disloyal. "The book," it avers, "is none the less great because it is so contemptibly indecent." That, after all, if plain speaking, cannot be dismissed as mere malediction. It gives the author his meed both of praise and blame. The *New York Tribune*, of all transatlantic journals the least censorious, summed up our author thus: "His flashing satire reminds one more of the subtle deadliness of an Italian stiletto than of the crushing blows of the Oriental scimitar." Poetical—very.

We forbear to linger over this unfortunate book. To this hour, those authors of lesser light who experienced the motions of the green-eyed monster because of Charles Reade's command over fortune are able to point to it as to an ugly blot on a fair picture. The people who indite, what an eminent publisher styles with cruel acerbity, the pork-chop variety of literature, are able to console themselves with the thought that, after all, Charles Reade once

dropped somewhere near to their normal level. Enough that, commercially, it was the least profitable of all his works. This is his own confession: "Yesterday I treated with Chapman & Hall for 'A Terrible Temptation.' He gives me £600 for a 3 vol. edition of 1500 copies. Should this be exhausted, fresh arrangements to be made. This is a pitiable decline on former sales. He gave me £1500 for limited copyright of 'Griffith Gaunt.' Bradbury & Evans gave me £2000 for ditto of 'Foul Play.' The serial in its first form will soon be the only considerable market open to me."

His next novel, "A Simpleton," appeared in serial form per *London Society*, at that time edited by one of the most fascinating of lady novelists, Florence Marryat. The title was unattractive; and the author, having finally discarded youthful irregularity as a source of dramatic interest, fell back on one among his many crotchets. It requires genius to invest anything so essentially pragmatical with charm, and this much Charles Reade did.

The book owed not a little to the practical talent and suggestive brain of Mrs. Seymour. She had already, and was partly conscious of it, the seeds of an internal complaint, destined in the course of a very few years to shorten her life, and was inclined to attribute it to the evil effects of tight-lacing. Here we have a cue to one of the leading features of the story. Others will be easily surmised from the subjoined letters addressed to her from Magdalen:

"It was quite a grand wedding" (of his niece) "and went off very fairly. The women, unfortunately, were divided into two classes—the idiotic gigglers, the dead silent. A fine day, and I drank my beautiful native air; slept at Ipsden one night.

"At 10.30 drove to Goring station—waited half an hour.

"Train to Didcot fifteen minutes.

"At Didcot waited an hour and a half.

"Train to Oxford half an hour.

"Reached here on a dismal, discouraging, wet afternoon.

"Fire in small room, which stinks of paint still, so lighted one in north room. Shall go to work *at once*, so pray send me some little material, no matter how rough, every day.

"Jot it down.

"Fling it on paper.

"Scenes.

"Observations.

"Single lines.

"Make a heading 'Rosiana,' of detached simple things for her to say or do.

"Oh dear! I feel rather old to have to work so hard!"

Again:

"Thanks for hint. The ladies, enthusiastic school-fellows, shall quarrel in the auction-room, and part forever.

"But can you not remember any little bit of color you have seen or heard in auction-rooms—any bit of Jew's chaff—any incident?

"If so, send it by return, or it will be too late, for I shall have passed through that topic, and got to servants and dress.

"I feel miserable at having to write about these things, yet I know I must. Now or never, I must give a picture of the inexperienced householder's troubles—*e. g.*, house-agent's lies, repairs, inaccessible roof, tile loose—man goes up and makes two holes for the plumber. Chimney-sweeper takes away the lead and charges 1s. 6d. Mention

the pipes. The passing workman knocks the pipes together. Every workman had in to repair begins by destroying, and then goes away and can't be got."

Ever since the Sheffield ratteners thought fit to honor him with a murderous menace, his dislike and distrust of the British workman became more and more rooted. Individual artisans, who happened to be in distress, partook of his bounty, but he vastly preferred to give to other classes. He believed in their dishonesty; and on one occasion when something had gone wrong with one of his London houses, wrote to Mrs. Seymour, "The fact is, you and I are much alike. We are a couple of wise fools. Very fit to guide *each other*, but not able to take care of No. 1, though I, for my part, have all the inclination."

There he wronged Mrs. Seymour. No daughter of Eve was more shrewd and calculating. None less capable of disbursing a shilling in mistake for elevenpence.

As for the honest proletarian, he did his little best to perpetuate the author's prejudice. When Charles Reade was dying, and doted, with the fondness of a broken heart, on his pets, some pretty Belgian hares, a blackguard, imported to do repairs — because, forsooth, his employer refused to submit to gross extortion — had the heartless barbarity to leave the garden-door open; and the author's favorite hare strayed into the streets to fall a victim, very possibly, to this identical ruffian. One can but regret that a myriad-handed class, eminent for such virtues as industry and truthfulness, should be traduced by its exceptions. The warmest friend of labor failed to convince Charles Reade that the samples he had encountered were otherwise than representative and typical.

"A Simpleton" had so fairly exhausted its creator that Mrs. Seymour despaired of his attempting another novel.

He found himself by no means reviled, but dismissed with a good-tempered laugh. This was little to his taste. His preecedent works had received such an amount of attention as was in itself a tribute to their calibre. He flung down his pen.

Mrs. Seymour held her peace, waited till the mood passed; but was none the less surprised to perceive how unready the pen of the ready writer had become. With admirable tact she let well alone for the nonee. He had other fish to fry—to wit, various minor theatrical ventures in London and the provinces, such as “Shilly-shally” * and “The Double Marriage,” produced at the Queen’s Theatre—not to omit “The Wandering Heir” in its dramatized form; as a story it appeared in *The Graphic*, as he puts it, “with no great effect,” a verdict Mr. Locker would probably hesitate to endorse. For this latter piece he engaged the services of no less an artist than Miss Ellen Terry, in succession to Mrs. John Wood, who made the character of Philippa. It will be remembered that Mr.

* This drama led to a very regrettable dispute between friends and literary comrades. It was an adaptation from Anthony Trollope’s clever story, “Ralph the Heir”; and its author being at the time in Australia, the adapter took his consent as a matter of course, intending to offer him half-profits in the theatrical venture. Mr. Trollope, however, fired up at his friend’s French-leave, and delivered himself in a tone of acerbity. Charles Reade apologized, and there the incident should have ended. Unfortunately the piece proved a failure, and this confirmed the unflattering view Mr. Trollope always entertained of Charles Reade’s capacity; while the other, stung by what he regarded as Trollope’s ingratitude, delivered himself of some sneering epithets—of which, perhaps, “mediocre” was the most offensive. Yet in private life each author spoke fraternally of the other, and this although neither appreciated the other’s handiwork. Certainly Mr. Trollope, when not in a splenetic vein, could say some very kind and generous things of Charles Reade.

George Annesley, his brother Compton's partner for many years, represented Charles Reade when he championed M. Maquet. Moreover, a branch of the Annesley family is located in Oxfordshire, so that the author was dealing with a theme in every way congenial when he seized on the famous Annesley romance. From what we can glean, he expected that it would eclipse the Tichborne case, then dragging its weary length through the courts.

At last the moment arrived when, for the first time during a space of twenty years, the successful author resembled the frozen-out workman in actually having no work to do.

"You want a suggestion," said Mrs. Seymour, "something to spur you."

He yawned. He wanted nothing of the kind. Yet he abhorred idleness. *Nulla dies sine linea*, he had already dubbed "the eleventh commandment."

At last the suggestion came, *ab extra*, and much more than mere suggestion. He opened up, in consequence, a negotiation, through the writer, with Messrs. Tillotson, for a new novel, on the theme misogynism; but this came to nothing, and the book eventually appeared—for reasons which need not be stated specifically; suffice it that they were never revealed, even to Messrs. Blackwood—anonymously in the columns of *Blackwood's Magazine*. There was, however, no mistaking the wand of the magician. Critics, readers, even those who skim and skip, all agreed that "The Woman-Hater" must be Charles Reade's handiwork. The characters, and the working of the first volume, may have seemed dissimilar to any he had previously produced. The plot, also, might have been termed a new departure. But the character of Rhoda Gale, M.D., was obviously, unmistakably his—no other hand could have conceived or drawn it.

At last, when the book appeared in volume form, the surmise of a friendly public was verified, and "The Woman-Hater" bears the name of Charles Reade.

Oddly enough, the lady-doctor, which may be said to have given the hall-mark to the book, was the one feature that exposed it to censure. The first volume ran so smoothly and dramatically, the interest aroused was so intense, that the break caused by the insertion of this pragmatical character could but be viewed with disfavor. It seemed to give the narrative an ugly twist and disturb its threads. For all that, the book pleased the general reader. It dealt with character and incident, and erred neither in respect of sensationalism nor eroticism. Ina and Zoe were both eulogized, notably in his exhaustive criticism by Mr. Walter Besant.

Nevertheless Charles Reade was dissatisfied. "I will write no more 'Woman-Haters,'" he remarks in his diary, "for the jenny-asses of this nation to refuse to read."

It was while he was engaged on this book that he took up the cudgels on behalf of a certain James Lambert—a hero and a martyr, as he elected to crown him. Across the Tweed there was no small scepticism as to the heroism or martyrdom of Lambert. The Scotch uphold everything national, from thistles to haggis, as being most superior; but they are as hard-headed as clannish, and by no means relish being found fault with. Now the charge preferred against Caledonia stern and wild, and Glasgow in particular, was one of crass indifference to the very qualities a Scotchman holds most in honor. The Scotch excel in bravery and endurance, the leading characteristics of heroes and martyrs. Hence, when a Southron pulled them up short, they felt affronted.

There were, however, exceptions. A priest of the Ro-

man obedience in Scotland sent Charles Reade a mite, and with it so genial a letter as to have been deemed by its recipient worthy a corner of his guard-book. Other perfervid Scots followed suit, while in England the story of Lambert, as narrated in the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, tapped the ever-ready purse of our kindly public. It was remarkable that his own countrymen took Charles Reade on trust, whereas the blue-bonnets across the border discounted him heavily.

Up till then no one had suspected the novelist of genuine philanthropy. It was presupposed that, when he championed prisoners, lunatics, and honest workmen, he merely utilized, with utter insincerity, these social elements for the purpose of agony-piling. Nay, more, he was accused broadly of wilfully exaggerating, of adding carmine to human blood, of doubling the horror of death itself. The world had yet to learn how cruelly it misjudged a vivid and picturesque mind—a mind which never saw as others, and could only express its thoughts in harmony with its own very acute emotions. This story of Lambert may have been in fact—though certainly never in intention—colored, but if so, it was by a generous and magnanimous pen. It affected its readers very much after the fashion of the prison-scenes in "*Sera Nunquam*," indeed, as an illustration of that, we may cite a letter from Sir Arthur Helps, begging the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* to forward at once a copy of the paper to be shown to the queen.

So much of the ground of the biographer is already occupied by the various collection, published under the generic title "Readiana," that we can only notice in brief some among his more striking letters and essays.

In the *Daily Telegraph* he broached a theory of ambi-

dexterity. On all sound physiological principles he was totally in error, nevertheless no *advocatus diaboli* in the Middle Ages ever defended a sophism with such consummate skill. Miss Braddon, Mrs. John Maxwell, wrote him a letter with her left hand by way of experiment, and it is legible. One swallow, however, does not make a summer, and, after all, few of her sex can boast the rare versatility of "Lady Audley." The rest of the world did not so much as essay to impose on the left the functions of the right hand.

In the same journal Charles Reade took up the cudgels on behalf of four condemned persons. Here his zeal for abstract justice caused him to exhibit an almost painful oblivion as to the hideous moral obliquity—apart from criminality—of the parties whose advocate he voluntarily constituted himself. Justice, however, was his grand passion. He seems to have declined mentally to discuss the question of innocence or guilt, and to have adhered doggedly to the point he raised, viz., that the miserable quartette were illegally condemned. His letters were of the sort that could not be gainsaid. Before their appearance it was publicly stated that the law would take its course—albeit strenuous efforts were being made on behalf of the girl, who might have been termed the *causa causans* of all the wrong. Within four hours of the appearance of Charles Reade's final letter, bearing the title "Hang in haste, repent at leisure," the noose was cut, all four prisoners were respited, and—rightly or wrongly—not one was hanged.

Charles Reade's analysis of the Tichborne *cause célèbre* was contributed to an ephemeral paper styled *Fact*. It served to clear away the cobwebs spun with persistence rather than ability by Dr. Kenealy. Both this and the

brief he wrote for the Stauntons would seem to demonstrate a capacity for law as well as for litigation. He might have sat on the judicial bench had he devoted his energies to his profession. Is it, however, a matter for regret? Let his country decide. We should have lost "Triplet," "Susan Merton," "Christie Johnstone," "Margaret of Sevenbergen," "Gerard," "Ina and Zoe," "Coupeau and Tom Robinson." We should not have gained, for the law, a Lush, still less a Cockburn. Better as it was.

We have seen how, with a design of exploiting the many original ideas wherewith his brain teemed, he at one time thought of speculating in a magazine. This idea abandoned, he varied its form and expanded it on different lines, preserving, however, its original essence. He proposed to himself to adopt, as a vehicle for his great thoughts, some journal with a colossal circulation, having in his eye, probably, that one which was readiest always to give him a place.

"The plan I propose," he writes on Jan. 1, 1878, "is, to make the most of my interest—a journal; to make and shake the nation, and *make it* write to me; for I have discovered that the only creature who knows *much* and various things is the public.

"I open the year with these designs, but none of that certainty I shall accomplish any one of them which marks our sanguine youth. My contemporaries, and even my juniors, fall daily around, and I observe that nobody calls their deaths untimely. I therefore am due. That is clear, and *vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam*. But then, as I don't know the hour of my death, why should I lie down and wait for death's chariot to roll over me? The time is certainly come when I ought not to write fool-

ish or wicked or frivolous things for the public; but should I die in the middle of a sentence warning the good not to be uncharitable, the wicked not to despair, then, methinks, I should die well—better perhaps than if I died repeating prayers like a parrot in St. Paul's Church.

“My first topic will be, I think,

“THE DARK PLACES OF THE LAND.

“(‘*The dark places of the land are full of cruelty.*’—Ps. xx.)

“And if that does not sicken,

“THE WISDOM AND FOLLY OF NATIONS.”

Of these essays, the former appears in “*Readiana*,” the latter we append, inasmuch as it amplifies the author's project as formulated in brief above.

“THE WISDOM AND FOLLY OF NATIONS.

“Men overrate themselves and everything connected with them. For centuries human astronomers overrated the globe. They knew it for a second-rate planet, and a puny orb compared with the sun; yet they assumed it to be the centre of our planetary system; why? because they were born on it. That form of egotism is cured, but not the disease itself. Men still overrate one part of this overrated planet; they think one small section of the earth excels all others in wisdom and virtue. The proof? I, the great I, was born upon it. This is sham patriotism, real egotism, and injurious folly, for it closes the greatest gate of mundane improvement, and makes frontiers a limit to the mind. Whoever travels much, reads much, and loves truth more than vanity, shall find that every nation is wise and foolish, has much to teach, and much to learn. Probably these letters will evoke a thousand

examples of this wholesome truth. Meantime accept a poor specimen by way of mere preliminary. China teaches Europe to economize labor in one way; she constructs high water-wheels with concave steps. These, let down into a running stream, raise the water, and discharge it from the highest steps down an incline, and so irrigate the meadow. Macartney made this known in Europe. France uses it. This same China has the wit to see that the respectable trader who sells bad meat is a felon. But this same China puts written prayers into a wheel and turns them for the good of the soul, and proclaims in shop windows, 'Gods made and mended.'

"The French have always, in my day, been socially wise, but politically unwise. They extract much innocent pleasure from every-day life; but they are too prone to hope, from experiments in government, that amelioration of man's lot which can only come from the popular exercise of private industry, self-denial, and other virtues.

'How small of all the ills that men endure
The part that kings or laws can make or cure.'

This people invented pisciculture, which was wise, and has massacred the small birds; and that is foolish.

"The Prussians were the first to protect children against selfish parents, by compulsory education, and to disregard all the outcry against it: this same wise people goes on, century after century, printing with obscure letters which the superior wisdom of Venice swept away soon after the invention of printing; and all unprejudiced nations have followed Venetian wisdom.

"The Turks have long seen that a man who sells unwholesome food is a felon, and not a civil offender, as we in our folly imagine. But these sensible Turks practise polygamy, which is unwise.

“In England we try questions of law most admirably. The Judges in Banco deliver each his own opinion, with a noble independence; whereas Continental Judges, like the doctors at Trent, agree to agree. Our Criminal Tribunals are without appeal, which is foolish, and yet—folly upon folly—cling to a method which is eternally failing to discover the truth, often condemns the innocent, and very often acquits the guilty. We try issues of fact in civil cases very honestly by strict rules of evidence, that exclude some truth but more falsehood; but we are behind our age and our neighbors in the machinery of justice. Although the nation is dotted with cities larger and more enlightened than London was when the very youngest of our great courts was established, we refuse to all those cities competent jurisdiction and judges worthy of the name. Instead of dividing the country into legal dioceses, which is the Continental and rational system, we cling to superannuated metropolization and strolling justices. Mark the consequences. While the London judges are traipsing about the country, trying hurriedly, and sometimes not trying at all, provincial cases that ought to be all carefully and patiently tried in Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Oxford, Nottingham, and York (for trial by jury becomes a national lure if only London judges are allowed to sum up the evidence), our vast metropolis is handed over to the dominion of injustice for three mortal months. Only conceive!—Justice cut off at the fountain-head for one fourth of the whole year—justice, which is the breath of every nation’s nostrils, and every city’s. The Lord’s day, Christmas day, and Good Friday are the only days on which justice ought to intermit. The nation is unwise to allow any other cessation of justice, and unwise to allow it to be called vacation; for that term sets

the convenience of a small clique above the vital interests of a great nation, and egotistical phrases, once accepted by a country, perpetuate unjust acts.

“The year 1851 was an epoch in the history of mankind. Several countries compared the products of their skill, which is a kind of wisdom, and even that narrow comparison opened the eyes of national egotism; we all got a glimpse of the salutary truth that every nation has much to learn and much to teach. Successive exhibitions confirmed this truth, and the world is profiting.

“Now if the laws and customs and habits of various nations could be brought into one building and submitted to our senses and our judgment, that exhibition of things mental would teach a nobler and a wider wisdom. The comparison of material objects teaches manufacturers, but this would create lawgivers and guide philanthropists.

“But no Crystal Palace can do the world so great a service. Can it be done at all?

“I once thought of a book as the vehicle of comparison; and made copious notes accordingly. But now I am humbler, and therefore most likely wiser. A book written by one man, and containing the fruits of his own travels, researches, and inquiries, is too small a vehicle for so great and dignified a theme.

“The Crystal Palaces point to the only way. There must be many contributors from every nation, and there must be a grand receptacle. I think the columns of a great journal might be the Crystal Palace to receive sifted contributions, and leave the world wiser than they found it.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FRIENDS, FAUTORS, AND FAVORITES.

BEFORE we approach the last success of the author, who considered himself to be before all else a dramatist, a success the sweetness whereof was doomed to turn to bitter ere it was so much as sipped, it may be well to notice in brief his social life, and also some among the many friends of his literary career.

The twelve years of Albert Gate were perhaps the happiest, as they were certainly the most prosperous, of his entire span. His residence may not inaptly be termed a *bijou*. It was cosy without being cramped, enriched with works of art throughout; at the back a complete *rus in urbe*, shaded by the trees of the park, on the reverse facing the confluence of three fashionable thoroughfares. In spite of chronic theatrical losses, which absorbed considerably more—according to his own reiterated asseveration—than half his receipts from literature, he enjoyed an almost unlimited command of ready money, nor was he ever a student of petty economy. The somewhat commanding manner he had inherited from his splendid sire was redeemed by sweetness and affability; and although his bent was never that of a gregarious animal, his society was sought eagerly—chiefly of course by people possessed of some brain power. At thirty-five he had been, so to speak, played out—his fellowship virtually pawned, his patrimony spent. At fifty-five he could boast himself a gen-

tleman of some fortune; his fellowship was alike unembarrassed and doubled in value, and his books and plays yielded him a fluctuating revenue.

But, above all, the business partnership with Mrs. Seymour had developed into so tender a friendship as is seldom found to gild the relations of people united only by the tie of mutual esteem. Dean Mansel, in his inimitable satire "Phrontisterion," sings, "To the bosom of his college fondly turned the childless man." In Charles Reade's case the bosom of his college was about the very hardest pillow his mind could conceive; the most unsympathetic, the most inappreciative. Mrs. Seymour was not a wife, but she proved herself a faithful housekeeper to the childless man, the compulsory celibate. Perhaps, without disrespect to her memory, we may say that her kindly sympathy caused him to forget his loneliness. *Certes*, it became part and parcel of his existence, and when it ceased his life was wrecked—he died by inches.

There occurred one episode in his tenure of the pretty, Dutchlike residence at Albert Gate which might have terminated disastrously, but for the ten minutes' extra tenacity of a man always eager to fight for his own hand.

Lord Beaumont, in the interest of Belgravia, let it be freely admitted, promoted a private bill to form a roadway directly from Sloane Street into the park. This bill, had it passed, would have entailed the demolition of Charles Reade's domicile, and his opinion was not asked as to whether he would be prepared to sacrifice the nest he had made for himself on the altar of public weal. Had he been consulted, a very ferocious negative would have been the response. As it was, his blood rose. He painted "Naboth's Vineyard" on the door-posts of his gate, and denounced the offending nobleman as the Ahab of the nineteenth

century. All the town took up the tale, and Lord Beaumont's scheme could not have been forwarded by the general chorus of laughter which ensued.

"Going to open a new pub over there?" remarked a Putney bus-driver, not very well instructed in his Old Testament. "Rum sign to give it, too! Who's Naboth?"

However, Charles Reade did not evaporate in this variety of protest. He went to work in right good earnest to defeat Lord Beaumont's bill. That nobleman had a very excellent case. There can be no doubt that an entrance to the park facing Sloane Street would be alike picturesque and of advantage to equestrians. It became simply a question which of the two was the stronger, the peer or the popular author; hence the latter, fighting as he was for hearth and home, put forth all his strength.

In his guard-book are two letters: from Lord Sherbroke, who, as Mr. Robert Lowe, was his tutor in the old days at Magdalen; and from Lord Selborne, who, as Mr. Roundell Palmer, was occasionally his *convive* in the common room. Both respond graciously to his request for an interview; the latter especially, who says, "I have seen with much interest and pleasure your distinguished career as a man of letters." They bear the following superscription: "Two fellow collegians of mine, Robert Lowe and Lord Selborne—Roundell Palmer. Threatened with spoliation in the year 1878 by one of those engines of clandestine iniquity, a private bill, I was obliged to seek interviews with these gentlemen after forty years. They were both very kind, as big men generally are on these occasions."

Next, he enlisted on his side the eloquence and intelligence of a lawyer having the ear of the House of Commons, Sir Henry James. For the end he had in view this

was most fortunate, inasmuch as he was quite in the mood to dictate to both Houses of Parliament dogmatically, and any such line of conduct would have damaged fatally his chances. Sir Henry James, like a prudent advocate, began by taking his irrepressible client in hand.

"My dear Reade," he writes, "I am not surprised at your indignation—which is very clearly shown in your petition. But if you wish to succeed in defeating the bill, you must act with moderation, and take some practical steps for that purpose." He then proceeds to formulate a course of action so as to obtain the support of the Commissioners of Works. Not to prolong the tale of litigious acrimony—the bill was eventually withdrawn by its promoters, mainly in consequence of a letter in the *Daily Telegraph* from Charles Reade. This effusion was by no means what its author intended—he styles it denaturalized, at Sir Henry James's suggestion; the fire and fury, in fact, having been forcibly eliminated. However, when a few days later he received this missive, "Dear Reade, take down the 'Naboth's Vineyard.' Bill is withdrawn," he recognized the wisdom of his counsel's advice, and his comment on Sir Henry James is, "He saved me my property from oligarchical spoliation. Long life to him!"

He has more to say on the following page. Sir Henry James probably failed to realize at a glance how completely incapable Charles Reade was of comprehending *badinage*, chaff, or the sort of fun which obtains among juniors, and is really benevolence, not ill-nature. Here he was pre-eminently his mother's son. We have already remarked on his perversity in regarding 'Chicken Hazard' as truculent, whereas it was nothing worse than rollicking fun. This is what he writes of Sir Henry James: "A very

able lawyer. Will be a judge if he lives and *chooses*.* Has judicial temples. Made fun of me at the club, in a way that rightly or wrongly mortified me from an able man. Was obliged to write a gentle remonstrance. His manner of receiving it does him very great credit." Here follows a very graceful note from Sir Henry James, amply justifying this encomium; and then: "This gentleman has since laid me under a deep and lasting obligation. A private bill to despoil Albert Terrace. I appealed to James as a man of principle. He read the facts—coldly at first, but fired up on principle; whereas vulgar minds are only to be fired by their passions. He advised me, encouraged me, fought for me in the Commons, and with the very wind of his good sword laid the oligarchs low."

That Charles Reade was an admirer of lawyers generally is by no means the case; indeed, he possessed a happy diagnosis of judicial as well as forensic ability, while blunderheadedness on the bench or at the bar aroused his scorn. For example, in Mrs. Seymour's action against the Curling family, wherein he posed as her champion, he writes: "My successes have been hardly won. In this case I had to dismiss Jessel—afterwards Master of the Rolls—for incapacity (*sic*); Ballantyne for colloquy with defendant's attorney; Teesdale, 'his solicitor,' because of her chief clerk's incapacity; and Rickard's managing clerk!" After this candid avowal, praise from him becomes doubled in value—the more so because he was sparing of it where lawyers were concerned. We can only discover, among his remains, four members of his profession for whom he expressed decided reverence; these were Mr. Justice Lush,

* This is prophetic. While these lines were in the press Sir Henry James refused a judgeship.

Lord Selborne, Sir Henry James, and Mr. Henry Matthews, the present Home Secretary. The last-named gentleman, styled "an able junior," won for him the Curling case, *vice* Jessel and Ballantyne—as he puts it, *dismissed*—and he sums up with the reflection that he never would have obtained this satisfactory result "but for my eccentricity and resolution in kicking rogues and fools out of the case, one after the other."

When not lashed to fury by a lawsuit, or writhing beneath the double thong of some critical censor, his days passed evenly and pleasantly. His pen, his club, the theatre, an evening at home, or with his family, such was the normal round; while Sunday afternoon was devoted to his sister Ellinor so long as her life lasted; and Sunday evening to the reception of friends, for the most part those of Mrs. Seymour. The rule *nulla dies sine lineâ* kept his mind fixed on the work he had on hand, and beyond a doubt the older he grew the more he loved his literary labor. We give a few casual excerpts from his irregular diaries to afford a rough idea of his social life:

"June 8, 1871.—My birthday—fifty-seven years old; present from Ellinor, at Brighton, pencil-case. Compton," (his brother), "staying with me. This day twelvemonth died my good friend and master, Dickens! *Multis ille bonis flebilis*. Dinner. Sole, goose, cherry pie, omelet, clotted cream. William came in the evening, brought me some grapes. I say, what a pity a fellow can only be born once a year!

"June 25.—Received the visit of Miss —, a Yankee girl, who wants to lecture here—I believe on Dickens. I was weak enough to be decoyed into a promise to hear her lecture privately with a friend or two. Not so weak as to go though. Mean to be more on my guard against the

egotism of the people who come to me. In a *personal interview* everybody gets the better of me. This girl tells me Miss — boasts in America of great intimacy with me, and announces a lecture about my life. I really intended to send her some particulars; but I fear the whole thing will lower me, the lady being a failure. Oh ! what caution, what prudence the world requires.

“July 16. — Dined Boucicault. Sat next to General Sickles, who murdered Key, his wife’s corrupter, and after imprisonment fought gallantly in the civil war, and now goes on crutches; one leg I fear. An intelligent man. Has every hopes of the negro : opportunities of studying him. Shook hands with him at parting. Did not feel any repugnance to him. No use saying I did.

“January 1. — A large supper-party. Thirty-seven people: Lords Londesborough and Newry, Hon. F. Wingfield, H. Matthews, Q. C., Mr. Lake, Miss Braddon, Henry Neville, Miss Pateman, the rising actress, and several very beautiful actresses.

“By Mrs. Seymour’s skill three tables across the room, one taking advantage of entrance. Nobody crushed. Servants—room to wait at all the tables. Two girls did all the waiting without any trouble. No green-grocer in white gloves. No bad music. No dancing. Yet all merry till 4 P.M.

“My nieces, Cecy and Florence, called to wish me good-bye on their way to India. They seem quite *insouciantes*. Florence explained to me why I have no wrinkles—‘Because you are not married.’

“October 21. — First night of ‘The Frozen Deep,’ Wigan was good enough to give me an excellent box. Invited Dallas and Mrs. D——, Miss Glyn. Miss Braddon in the house—chatted with her. Says she got the plot of ‘Birds

of Prey' at my table. The play poorly acted. It is a pretty play, but wanted a head at rehearsal. Too much narrative; but, after all, original and interesting, and the closing scene great and pathetic. Ah, yes! let us see the goodness and beauty of the human soul on the stage. There is little enough of it to be seen *en ville*!

"Dined with Sir Charles Taylor. Oysters, thin soup, turbot, little mutton pies much peppered, fillet of black-cock (delicious), haunch of red-deer (very fine, and for a wonder tender), ham, jelly, cream, grouse, Italian sardines, little oat-cakes. Six people. No celebrities. Rubber. *Perdidi pecuniam*.

"Breakfast 9.30. Just skimming two newspapers, to be read more carefully after dinner, wasted till 12.30. Thus I never get a day's work and never shall. Pasting in extracts—Percy about animals, till nearly three. Tedious work. It being almost impossible to classify them properly at once, I paste them first into a book as *classificanda*. Then by degrees I may cut them out, and put them in a guard-book in some order. But it is not easy to me. I have the desire for method, but not the gift.

"January 21.—Letters and journals read, and breakfast over by 10.15 A.M.

"2 P.M.—Pasted in a few extracts—Percy.

"3 P.M.—Wrote my first story for publication, title, 'A Special Constable.' The 'Special Constable' is a dog. In its original form it is a mere newspaper anecdote, striking to a man of imagination, but not to the public—thirty-five lines of print. I have made it from an anecdote into a story.

"4 P.M.—Story completed—a good day's work."

This story was the first of the series he terms *Bon. Fab.*, published in *Belgravia* as "Good Stories of Men and Animals."

"Dined with Boucicault to warm his new dining-room. *Convives*—Yates, Sir H. Thompson, Webster, a foreigner, a gentleman whose mouth was entirely concealed with hair that looked like a mat, O'Dowd, Boucicault, Reade. No ladies. Clear turtle, thick whiting pudding, lobster, cutlets, salmon suchet. An *entrée*, and a turkey-poult larded. Pease, potatoes, ham. A pleasant dinner—as it always is when there are no ladies to confine the conversation within their own narrow bonds—but not so brilliant as sometimes. Yates good company. Billy Russell was threatened, but did not come, unfortunately."

[N.B.—Mr. Edmund Yates was throughout a prime favorite with our author, so much so that he could not bring himself to accept the more than handsome overtures of the *Whitchall Review*, lest he should appear in opposition to his friend.]

"Poor old Billy" (his brother William) "has taken *four stalls* for boxing night, *i. e.*, for 'It is Never Too Late to Mend.' I told my leading lady. Of course, I added he had *forestalled* the public. She said that was clever. So be it.

"Whist. Lost £3 10s. to Sergeant Ballantyne, of whom I generally win. Ballantyne bets me £1 in the rubber and the usual odds, five to two on the first game.

"*Perdidi diem*. A thoroughly blank day. Not a stroke of work, though I have a great subject on hand. Morning, a few letters. Then two hours' company. Then four hours' whist—*proh pudor!* Dinner, and a French novel. At my age such a day is monstrous, and ought to fill me with shame.

"Letters. Extracting dialect from the drama 'Joan.' Whist—won 23s. Dinner at 6.50, instead of 6.30. Home in good time too. Pheasant, beefsteak pudding, pint of sparkling Moselle.

“Dies præ omnibus infelix. Perdidi super whistam sedecim libras. O dies nefastus !”

The above extracts, selected almost at random, give a fair picture of the author's manner of life. He was at that period an honest and laborious toiler, yet a firm believer in the virtue of an amusement which now usurped the hours dedicated in his youth to field sports, cricket, skittles, bowls, and, be it added, battledore and shuttlecock, a very favorite game of his. He seemed to reproach himself for sitting so long over the card-table. Mrs. Seymour, on the other hand, favored his whist. “It distracts his mind,” she said, “from his work, and cheers him.” Doubtless this may have been the case as a rule ; yet evidently when his day's losses reached £16 he was inclined to fret, and on such occasions this particular feature in his daily routine seemed to prick his conscience. As the years rolled on, and his reputation was not being enhanced, a feeling of dissatisfaction stole upon him, and at last he thought seriously of standing for some constituency as an independent candidate. Here, however, he encountered the strenuous opposition of Mrs. Seymour.

“Whatever you do,” she cried to the writer of these lines, “don't on any account urge your uncle to embark on a career for which his irritability unfits him.”

Mrs. Seymour may have judged rightly, and certainly Charles Reade's age seemed almost to offer a bar to a political experiment. Anyhow the notion never got beyond mere discussion; the course of events took another, and a sadder, turn.

In connection with the ordinary social life of our author we believe it will be of interest both to mention in brief his chief literary friends, and also, where it is feasible, to append his verdict on them and theirs on him.

Next to Lord Lytton, the novelist, whose letters he religiously preserved, Charles Dickens occupied the highest place in his esteem. He styles him, as we have already seen, his master, and held his genius in love and reverence. On one occasion he had the alternative of meeting at dinner a member of the aristocracy, whom he had every desire to cultivate, or Charles Dickens. His reply was caustic. "If I am asked to meet a celebrity or an obscurity," he wrote, "I prefer the celebrity."

Among many letters, the longer referring to the not very alluring topic of international copyright, addressed by Charles Dickens to Charles Reade, it is hardly possible to make a satisfactory selection. Here is a kindly fragment: "I *must* write you a line to say how interested I am in your story, and to congratulate you upon its admirable art and its surprising force and vigor."

Again, this from Gadshill:

"MY DEAR READE,—You once gave me hope of your coming down to see me here; could you join our family party on the last day of the old year? If so, I should be delighted to see you, and to show you an old castle, and an old county in a new-year's day ramble.

"Faithfully yours always,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

Under this honored name Charles Reade wrote in his guard-book but one word, "Eheu!"—a fitting tribute. He held Charles Dickens to be the greatest Englishman of the century, and never hesitated to express his indignation at a system which has choked the peerage with third-rate lawyers and tenth-rate politicians, while it has almost persistently excluded genius. His own labors on behalf of the oppressed, his self-sacrificing philanthropy, his championship of right, never received the smallest recognition; and on the one occasion when he headed a deputa-

tion on the subject of international copyright to interview Lord Beaconsfield, that eminent personage exhibited the quality of his breeding by yawning in his face. He had not to yawn twice. Charles Reade came to an abrupt pause in the very core of his subject, bowed, and retired.

Among his epistolary treasures a letter of Miss Hogarth was especially cherished. It is addressed from Gadshill on the eve of departure from that home which the supreme novelist had created and adorned.

This lady writes:

"MY DEAR MR. READE,—My dearest brother-in-law left me a legacy of all the little familiar objects in his room and on his writing-table. And I understood him to mean that I should distribute them among the many friends who loved him. My task has been a very difficult one—as you may suppose—the ‘objects’ being so very few in proportion. So I am obliged to give the merest trifle to each. But I am quite sure that you—who loved and revered him as he deserved—will be glad to have something that belonged to him familiarly, even though the thing is of no value in itself. Therefore I venture to send you this little pen-tray as a relie. It belonged to our little sitting-room at the office—a place that he was very fond of—and used very much, so that this little article was constantly under his eye, and associated with his familiar every-day life. Will you accept it from me with my love and regard? You don’t need to be told by me—still I think it will be pleasant to you—now—to have a fresh assurance of the affection and esteem in which he held you. You did not meet very often; but I never heard him speak of you except with the heartiest and most cordial expressions of admiration, respect, and personal affection.

"We leave this dear place forever next Monday. It will be a good thing for us all now when that wrench is over; but it is a terrible hour to look forward to.

"Believe me, my dear Mr. Reade, affectionately yours,

"GEORGINA HOGARTH."

The above is inscribed by Charles Reade, "a valued letter from Miss Hogarth, giving me Dickens’s pen-tray, and

assuring me of his kindly feelings towards me, which indeed *he* never left me in doubt of."

His idolatry of Charles Dickens caused our author perhaps to underestimate not only George Eliot, but Thackeray also, and Trollope. The last-named novelist, if quick to resent what he deemed a liberty, was filled with kindly sentiments for his brother in art, and spoke of him with warmth. Charles Reade was more appreciative of a writer of the same school—Mrs. Oliphant—possibly because of her sex, for he was indisposed towards severity where lady authors were concerned, provided that they were not unduly belauded, and avoided the philosophical error of dullness. He has preserved some of this lady's letters, but without comment. Next to Dickens, however, he ranked, *qualis inter viburna cupressus*, his very dear friend, Mr. Wilkie Collins, "an artist of the pen. There are terribly few among writers," was his terse eulogium, the plain fact being that this past master in the art of dramatic construction excels all competitors just where most English authors fail. His plots resemble nothing so much as the intricate arabesques of an Oriental designer. Their complexity dazzles, yet they are always simple, never obscure. Moreover—and here they commanded Charles Reade's most earnest enthusiasm—they, or rather some of them, lend themselves intuitively to the stage. They dramatize easily and naturally; indeed "The New Magdalen" may be fairly termed one of the most effective of modern dramas. Mr. Wilkie Collins, therefore, if we may put it so, hit Charles Reade's ideal, and secured, in consequence, that sort of genuine admiration which an author offers his brother in art when he esteems him greater than himself. For ourselves, we refrain from instituting a comparison between writers in every detail dissimilar. It is enough

that Charles Reade rendered due homage to his friend, and towards him was as appreciative as affectionate. He preserved his letters as heirlooms for his family—in a word he believed in him both as a man and as an author whose future is assured.

In no less esteem did he hold another of the great novelists of the Victorian era. Mrs. John Maxwell (M. E. Bradon) possesses that special quality which Charles Reade cultivated as a prime essential of dramatic narration—*viz.*, the faculty of enchaining a reader without a halt or break. It was this idea which caused our author, *malgré* the example of Dickens, to describe a story within a story as “a flaw in art”—*i. e.*, it destroys the main interest. No sooner had this most charming writer gained a reputation, as it were by a stroke of the pen, than Charles Reade hastened to court her acquaintance, and this soon ripened into friendship. He was ever grateful for the generous hospitality of Lichfield House, but most especially so when he could monopolize the attention of its mistress. He avowed himself, in fact, thoroughly happy in the company of Mrs. Maxwell, delighted with her conversation, interested in herself, her books, and all that concerned her. We are fortunately able to append this lady’s own brief reminiscences of a friend, and a very sincere one also. Would that in return we could reproduce the hundred and one kind words he had always on the tip of his tongue for her!

“One of the brightest memories of my literary life,” she writes, “is my memory of Mr. Charles Reade. He sought me out at the outset of my career, and extended the hand of friendship to a beginner in literature with a generous kindness which never failed me in after-years. He had a chivalrous and protecting spirit in all his deal-

ings with women, or with the weak; the same spirit which so often urged him to fight on the losing side, and to bring to bear all the power of his fiery pen in the cause of the fallen or the oppressed. He, who in public life was the fiercest of foes and partisans, where wrong or injustice had to be encountered, was in domestic life the gentlest, meekest, loveliest spirit; the ideal gentleman and Christian, full to overflowing of that charity which suffereth long and is kind.

“How many traits of gentleness I could recall, did I not fear to lapse into triviality. One little incident struck me as characteristic of his benevolence and thoughtfulness for others. He was in the habit of having his manuscript copied in a large, bold hand on foolscap paper, leaving about half of each sheet as margin for corrections and interpolations.

“‘My copyist calls every day for more work,’ he said, ‘and I don’t like to disappoint him, poor fellow, so he keeps me up to the mark, when I am inclined to be idle.’

“His house was a refuge for the destitute and the unhappy. To be in trouble was a passport to Charles Reade’s hospitality, and that faithful friend of long years who brightened his home by her genial presence was of the same temper. To nurse the sick, to comfort the mourner, to create an atmosphere of friendliness and easy, gracious hospitality was as natural to Laura Seymour as to Charles Reade.

“To children his manner was delightful; and he never seemed bored by their presence. In many of his tastes, notably his gastronomical tastes, he was still a child; liked jams and tarts and puddings, and had a childish leaning to the unwholesome, rather than the wholesome, in diet. His love of pets, and strange ones, was in some wise childlike.

Well do I remember his effort to acclimatize a small antelope in his back garden, and his pride in the melancholy-looking beast which stared in at us through the plate-glass doors of his study. He tried hard to tame a hare, to be to him what Puss was to Cowper; but the animal was too stupid to appreciate or understand the honor conferred upon him. Only man's true and loyal friend, the horse or the dog, was worthy of Charles Reade's love. His notebooks were a hobby and a pride; but as these are known to the public, I will not dwell upon them. Once I ventured to ask if these huge storehouses of miscellaneous information really repaid him for the trouble of collecting them. He was not angry, but answered, meekly, 'Well, perhaps they do not. I sometimes doubt if they are not too voluminous to be useful;' yet with a glance of pride at the elephantine red-backed folios ranged at the base of his cyclopean writing-table.

"To have him all to one's self, as it were, in a long evening of discursive talk, drifting from one subject to another, was unalloyed delight. Would that there had been a Boswell to remember and preserve all such conversations. Deepest thought and strong originality marked all his ideas and opinions upon men and books; and no man I ever met had a more generous appreciation of the merits of his contemporaries or a greater reverence for the mighty dead. I remember once, when looking through his books with him, he laid his hand upon Campbell's 'Life of Lord Mansfield,' and said, 'What a man that was! Some of his judgments exhibit a sense of justice that was almost divine.' And there was a touch of pathos in the earnestness of his tone.

"He had a profound contempt for the theorists who argue that Shakespeare was an incapable and an impostor,

a mere stalking-horse for Lord Bacon. It was a sign of incipient madness, he declared, to have any doubt as to the identity of him who wrote 'Macbeth' and 'Othello.' 'It was no more in Bacon's power to have written those plays than it was in Locke's or Dugald Stewart's. The whole bent and character of the man's mind was different.'

"Poet, dreamer, and thinker as he was in hours of relaxation, in all the business of life he was severely practical. Never was a man more in the movement of his time. I told him once that I rarely read the newspapers, as I had only too little time for reading books. 'You should read the papers,' he said, 'and leave books alone.'

"Late in the evening he would seat himself at the piano, and, after playing a few chords, would sing some old-world ballad, in a low voice which was full of tenderness. Those simple, pathetic songs seemed a fitting close to the long evening of talk. Never can I forget those evenings in our house or in his, nor his genial welcome at all times, pleased to be taken by surprise in his picturesque working-room, half library, half picture-gallery, always greeting his friends with the same gentle cordiality.

"Difficult to believe that this most gracious and exceptionally courteous English gentleman was the bellicose Charles Reade, whose spirited advocacy of his own cause, when smarting under piracy, or malevolent libel, had all the force and vigor of Cicero or Edward Clark."

Charles Reade was, perhaps—as regards the male sex at all events—a man of few friends, yet with many acquaintances, and oftentimes rated an author as his friend, as it were for the sake of sympathy, and because he respected his brain-power. Thus, for example, he styled Mr. James Rice, "one of my few friends on the press, as it is called—

a Cambridge man;" adding, as a foot-note, "and has since written 'Ready-money, Mortiboy.'" Elsewhere he has more to say in favor of the excellent book, and does not omit in his eulogium the senior partner in its production, Mr. Walter Besant. Strange to relate, he failed to perceive merit in "Ouida" till the writer of these lines placed in his hand that tragic idyl, "Two Little Wooden Shoes," when he at first burst forth into rhapsody. Miss Broughton he summed up briefly as "a spirited girl." To the sterner sex he is not always quite so civil, *e. g.*, he thus describes Mr. Mark Twain: "An American humorist, and really has much humor. But oh! his speech. Knock a macaw's head on an iron rail!" Mark Lemon he dismisses as a genial companion and a writer of smart farces, adding sorrowfully the valedictory "Gone!" his tribute to those among his circle who had left it. For Shirley Brooks he has no more to say than that he was his good friend.

It would be unhandsome on our part if we failed to enumerate among Charles Reade's brothers in the Republic of Literati his earliest friend and collaborator, Mr. Tom Taylor, or his literary partner of later days, Mr. Dion Boucicault. Mr. Tom Taylor, in a certain sense, may be deemed the medium whereby he first appeared before the public. He was that estimable gentleman's frequent guest. Mr. Arnold Taylor describes their collaboration in "Masks and Faces" as thus: "One was the cutter-out; the other the cuttee." Whether that be a correct representation of the creative process which resulted in so grand a success, or only partly accurate, certain it is that at that time Charles Reade leaned on Tom Taylor for advice, and received from him a boon he sorely stood in need of, *viz.*, encouragement. Many years later, when Tom Taylor's

race was run, and the gifted musician who had been his life's partner was a widow, Charles Reade evinced his appreciation of Tom Taylor's aid in a manner alike characteristic and delicate. He knew how deeply he was indebted to the strong man who placed his foot for him on the first rung of the ladder of fame.

We have already noticed Mr. Dion Boucicault's share in "Foul Play." This collaboration gratified Charles Reade more thoroughly than any during his lifetime; and although he could chaff Mr. Boucicault as "a sly fox," esteemed both his society and friendship very highly. On one occasion, when a remark was hazarded in disparagement of a drama by this gentleman, he returned contemptuously on the speaker with the query, "Will you find me another man in England who could write such a comedy?" Nor was his belief in Mr. Boucicault ever shaken—indeed, he envied his capacity for commanding both the tears and laughter, the astonishment and delight, of the Gallery.

Charles Reade's acquaintance with journalists was not quite as extensive as might have been presupposed. Mr. Yates he thoroughly liked, but chiefly as a novelist who possesses a strong grasp of plot and situation. Mr. Edwin Arnold he corresponded with for many years, and on a great variety of subjects. His appreciation of the poet and essayist, the scholar and the Orientalist, may be inferred from the simple fact that he cherished all letters from this gentleman having reference to his books. He has headed his name in his guard-book with the Horatian compliment, *Integer vitæ scelerisque purus*; and in mentioning the fact of Mr. Arnold having sent him a copy of "Hero and Leander"—*merum sal* he defines it—says, "I never meet this excellent person, but our mutual respect

remains unchanged ; and I often see in *The Telegraph* allusions and passing illustrations that show me how well he has read, and understood, my works." Mr. Greenwood, erst of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, gave him a place in his columns on more than one occasion, and their intercourse was agreeable and cordial.

He dubbed him "a most intelligent and business gentleman." George Lewes, on one occasion, wrote, "An article by you that wouldn't be worth printing would be a curiosity in its way—it must be so infernally wrong." Mr. John Oxenford he describes "as a very genial companion;" and he displayed his esteem for John Forster by preserving his autograph, as also that of Mr. Sutherland Edwards. Nevertheless, although he elected to inscribe along with the more exact designations, dramatist and novelist, that also of journalist on his tombstone, he never fraternized largely with the press-gang. Politics, and, indeed, political men, failed to interest him. His was not the type of mind to stomach compromises or to tolerate party manœuvres; hence his impatience of home politics—indeed, he was far more affected by those of the United States; and it is quite the case that none were more welcome at Albert Gate than Americans. He defined Reverdy Johnson as "a just man;" wrote warmly of Dr. Russell Lowell, and was ever charmed by the society of his distant cousin, General Meredith Read, of the U. S. Legation at Athens.

The force of circumstances, no less than inclination, brought him into close connection with the dramatic profession. Mrs. Seymour's personal friends were all, of either sex, wearers of the sock and buskin. They thronged her portion of the Albert Gate home; and generally, though not invariably, were acceptable to its master. Devoted to the drama, he could but assimilate up to a certain point

with its exponents. Yet, to be strictly truthful, even these very charming people could bore him. "It's all very well," he said, apropos of his histrionic friends, "if you will be content to sit by the hour and listen to the record of their triumphs, then they are delighted with you." In extenuation of this speech we may add that he was too easily bored, and not seldom went off into a brown study, leaving the individual addressing him to run on, and run down, *à discretion*. The habit of total self-abstraction had become rooted ; and often when an auditor condemned his inattention as rude, he could not help himself. It required a woman, and one with a well-stored mind, a versatile tongue, and quick sympathy, such as Miss Bradon (Mrs. John Maxwell), to hold his attention for any length of time ; and there were a few—a very few members of the theatrical profession thus endowed, whose company was to him supremely grateful.

Among them we may mention first, and most particularly, the two gifted sisters, Kate and Ellen Terry. The latter he regarded almost in the light of a daughter ; on the former he lavished praise, such as in his younger days he would have reserved solely for Mrs. Stirling. This is his deliverance on the elder sister :

"The sweetest, tenderest, and most intelligent actress of the day. Young in years, but old in experience, and fuller of talent than ever an egg was of meat. She shone most, to my mind, in modern characters, and her *forte* lay in the pathetic. She represented with great truth all feminine sorrows. I have seen actresses with more fire, but none to equal her in sweet and gentle pathos. The moment she stepped on the stage the manly breast took a keen interest in her. I had only twice the good-fortune to do business with her. Aged thirteen she played Joliquet

in 'The Courier of Lyons,' and Dora in my poetical drama was her last creation. She played the two parts to absolute perfection. In 'Dora' she sang 'The Brook' to her dying lover; broke down in the middle of the words, 'For men may come and men may go'—shed real tears, and then by an effort finished the song. This was genius. She had little voice, but by dint of brains far outsang the operatic singers. Her face not remarkably pretty in absolute repose, but beautiful under the illumination of expression. Dora, terrified by her uncle's violence, swoons away at last. Miss Terry did this with such absolute truth in all the details that I went behind the scene one night to watch her more closely. But if I had gone with a microscope this honest and careful artist would have borne the test—it was quite indistinguishable from a real faint; and the little hysterical sobs with which she came to, and then the gentle weeping, and the dovelike way she said, 'His hard words frightened me so,' was infinitely feminine and lovable. At twenty-six years of age she married Mr. Arthur Lewis, and left the stage forever.

"We had her on the boards, though, in 1870. I produced the 'Malade Imaginaire.' We got Kate to rehearsal, and after rehearsal she gave me her ideas in my room; and in her excitement pulled me all down the room, with amazing vigor, I remember. This young lady attends the theatre constantly on first nights, and the sight of her face always gives me a thrill of pleasure. Such is the power of association, set agoing by memory of her rare talent and intelligence. She was an actress who never whined. Now, the women all whine upon the stage."

Miss Ellen Terry has assumed all the laurels her clever sister gathered, and added withal to them more than one

crown of her own. She has played in two hemispheres as the representative actress of England, her genius having commanded the generous, if not always ungrudging, plaudits of our intelligent and hypercritical American cousins. The following paragraph of Charles Reade's *catalogue raisonnée* was penned before this great artist had attained her zenith, and at a time when she was overshadowed by her elder sister. Its strain is that which might be applied to a clever *débutante* of tender years, who regarded the white-haired dramatist as her quasi-father, and, indeed, addressed him playfully as such.

"Yes, dear papa," she wrote, "I hope to be with you to-morrow at dinner. Thank you for saying I may come. Most affectionately your Ellen Terry.

"Love to Mrs. Seymour."

Whereupon Charles Reade, in giving this pretty billet a niche in his guard-book, appends this comment :

"ELLEN TERRY. A young lady highly gifted with what Voltaire justly calls *le grand art de plaire*. She was a very promising actress—married young to Mr. Watt the painter. Unfortunate differences ended in a separation, and instead of returning to the stage she wasted some years in the country. In 1873 I coaxed her back to play Philippa at the Queen's Theatre, and she was afterwards my leading actress in a provincial tour. She played Helen Rolleston very finely" ("Foul Play"). "In 1875 engaged to play Portia at the Prince of Wales' Theatre ; and her performance is the principal histrionic attraction, the Shylock of Mr. Coghlan being considered somewhat slow and monotonous.

"Ellen Terry is an enigma. Her eyes are pale, her nose rather long, her mouth nothing particular. Complexion

a delicate brick-dust, her hair rather like tow. Yet somehow she is *beautiful*. Her expression *kills* any pretty face you see beside her. Her figure is lean and bony, her hand masculine in size and form. Yet she is a pattern of fawn-like grace, whether in movement or repose. Grace pervades the hussy. In character impulsive, intelligent, weak, hysterical—in short, all that is abominable and charming in woman.

“ DIALOGUE.

“ ELLEN TERRY. ‘ And who is your leading lady now—that I may hate her ?’

“ CHARLES READE. ‘ Miss ——’

“ ELLEN TERRY (rubbing her hands). ‘ Oh, I’m so pleased. *She* can give you a good hiding. *She will* too !’ ”

Again :

“ Ellen Terry is a very charming actress. I see through and through her. Yet she pleases me all the same. Little duck !”

It was a decided misfortune for the success of Charles Reade’s later dramas, more particularly “ Drink ”—whereof more anon—that he was unable to secure the services of this lady, whose devotion to him was indeed filial, whose capacity for the creation of character is unrivalled. That was not to be. She had already assumed the foremost position on the stage, and had greater aims to fulfil. But that she never faltered in her regard for her “ Papa-in-art ” must ever be a subject of gratulation to those who, like ourselves, reverence his memory; the more so, because he must often have tried her temper when she was his leading lady, for in matters of stage management he was a tyrannical disciplinarian. For all that, the man and the woman of genius learned to esteem each other; and he

watched her upward career, not merely with pleasure, but with a sort of paternal pride.

It will go without the saying that the creator of that superb part, "Peg Woffington," felt no small indebtedness to the lady, who, *malgré* an inevitable facial dissimilarity to the Irish actress of history, enacted the part sympathetically, and with rare fascination. Below a very natural and sweet letter of hers, ending with a cordial "God bless you!" Charles Reade has inscribed these words, "Mrs. Baneroft (Marie Wilton), a gifted and amiable artist, who in this letter makes too much of my friendliness, which both she and her husband had so richly earned by their kindness and courtesy to me." On another page in the same volume is a cordial note from Mr. Baneroft, which the recipient retained for the writer's sake.

A prime favorite with Charles Reade was that most vivacious and sparkling of comedians, Mrs. John Wood. He has a strong word of commendation for this lady, whose natural vein of fun oozes out at all times and in all seasons; *e.g.*, on board the good ship *Calabria*, off Queenstown, she wrote, "Tell Mrs. Seymour I shall never forget her, for I owe her two-and-sixpence;" and, a few lines further on, "I have been a little sick, and hope to be more so." This is his definition: "MRS. JOHN WOOD, an actress with real humor, almost the only one left us by burlesque. Since writing this and other letters to me, she has become a manager and has played, *inter alia*, Phæbe in 'Paul Pry' with an effect never attained before. Charming droll, on the stage and off it. Since writing this has astonished the public by her performance of Philippa, in my drama, 'The Wandering Heir.'"

Another lady of sterling merit who obtained our author's approbation as an artist, and his esteem on account of her

womanly qualities, was Mrs. Bella Pateman. Elsewhere he expressed his conviction that she was destined to advance to the front rank of her profession when as yet she was only a *débutante*. In his guard-book he writes of her in terms expressive of sincere admiration—indeed, the concluding words have themselves the significance of volumes.

This is what he has to say: "MRS. PATEMAN. A respectable actress. The tender and true affection between her and her worthy husband are beautiful to see in a theatre—*That den of lubricity.*"

Last, but not least, among Charles Reade's theatrical friends of the fair sex must be mentioned the brightest ornament of the profession, one whose genius and whose virtues alike illumine and exalt the stage, Mrs. Kendall. Always gentle and playful with children, he visited this lady's nursery at the time when his mind was absorbed with ambidexterity, and essayed to teach the little ones how to use either hand and arm indifferently. The experiment of course was futile, but the remembrance of this professional lecture has lasted in Harley Street to this very hour. Is it not true that what good men do—even if it be of dubious utility—is destined to live after them?

Among Charles Reade's theatrical friends of the sterner sex, the name of Henry Irving stands prominent. It was his boast that he, in the wilds of Manchester—was the original discoverer of this rare nugget. Mr. Irving denies the soft impeachment. Nevertheless it was, though erroneous, as firm an article of Charles Reade's belief as was George the Fourth's in his presence at Waterloo. Be that as it may, no critic ever understood the great actor more analytically than Charles Reade. When speaking of his series of triumphs at the Lyceum, he seems to us to have hit the very centre of the gold when he affirmed that all

must be attributed to Mr. Irving's *presence*, his magnetic power over an audience. This potentiality exists alike in actors and orators of the highest calibre. It is quite apart from speech, for the spell is cast before a word is uttered. It was noteworthy especially in Samuel Wilberforce; and is possessed in a high degree by Dr. Parker. The late Rev. Robert Aitken was endowed with this gift in so great a degree that before he had spoken a dozen words his suppressed emotion seemed contagious, and the church resounded with sobs. It was this sublime quality which Charles Reade, the most acute of all observers, and not the least susceptible of emotion, perceived in Mr. Irving, *before that great artist was a known man*; and it was his boast that whereas Tom Taylor failed to recognize it, it came to him as a revelation. Needless to add that, like all lovers of the drama, he rejoiced that this country and this age should possess so splendid an exponent of the form of art he loved so well. Mr. Irving's letters to him were preserved religiously, as precious treasures.

We have already adverted to his love and respect for Mr. Henry Neville. There was, apart from the stage, much to evoke both sentiments. Those who have perused these pages must have learned, if they knew it not before, that Charles Reade was pre-eminently both a *man* and a lover of art. Mr. Neville was here his *alter ego*. He is an enthusiastic volunteer, and had he been a soldier would have adorned the profession of arms. He is also a draughtsman of no mean capacity, and thus also was in harmony with one who boasted himself a connoisseur of pictures as well as of violins. It was a singular coincidence that the descendant of the Ipsden smith—and they had a grand forge there in the olden days, when the beechen logs served for fuel and coal was a luxury—should have set manly

Henry Neville to forge a blade on the stage, and perhaps himself have instructed him how to go to work. Certainly, not merely 'Put Yourself in His Place,' but '*Sera Nunquam*' also, owed much to this same sterling artist—a debt Charles Reade was ever ready to acknowledge in full.

Mr. Charles Warner and Mr. J. L. Toole were both claimed by our author as, if we may put it so, his selections. The former may be termed fairly one of the biggest trumps a dramatist ever held in his hand. He imparted life, vigor, and romance to the character of Tom Robinson, and as Coupeau was phenomenal; indeed, he not only created the character, but saved Charles Reade's adaptation of '*L'Assommoir*.' As a small token or reminder of their joint success the author gave the actor a cup bearing the inscription, "*Hoc Carolo Carolus frater in arte dedit.*" They were in truth *fratres fraterrimi*; yet at the outset the author felt a little bit piqued. "Let them praise Charley Warner as much as they will," he pleaded, "but it is not quite fair altogether to ignore Charley Reade."

Whether Mr. Toole was indebted to Charles Reade for sponsorship is not quite so clear. That gentleman's first London engagement was under Mrs. Seymour at the St. James' Theatre, so that it would seem likely that the manageress may have been influenced by the judgment of her partner in theatrical speculation. Mr. Toole made a success in "Honor Before Titles," one of our author's least known dramas; and played Triplet to Mrs. Scymour's Peg Woffington, at Edinburgh. He writes, "I knew Mr. Charles Reade very well, and liked him very much, and I think he liked me. He was greatly in earnest in all his works, and once brought an action for libel against the *Morning Advertiser*, respecting one of his plays called

‘Shilly-shally.’ He was very anxious for me to appear in the witness-box, and *give evidence in the dress of the character I acted, and act the scene before the judge and jury!* Of course I did not do so.” The more’s the pity, we can but remark. The deadly-dulness of the bar witticisms would have been pleasantly relieved by the apparition of Mr. Toole in panoply.

The circumstances in connection with a letter from Mr. Wilson Barrett to Charles Reade happen to be of so delicate a nature—relating in fact to a money question—that we feel ourselves unable to publish it. Yet we can but regret our inability to do so, for assuredly a more magnanimous and chivalrous communication from manager to author was never penned. This great actor had barely attained his zenith when the terrible blow descended that shattered the artistic life of Charles Reade. It was as a man, and a gentleman therefore, that he knew Mr. Wilson Barrett for the most part—yet he lived to see him play and appreciate his genius.

There remain two histrionic celebrities, each of whom, owing to their Yankee flavor, interested Charles Reade. Mr. Jefferson he styles “a distinguished American actor, known here by his personation of ‘Rip Van Winkle’—also a very intelligent man off the stage.” Of Mr. Sothern, representative of Lord Dundreary, etc., he writes, “This gentleman is a dry humorist. I believe he professes to mesmerize; and, in imitation of Davenport Brothers, he can get his hands out of any knot I can tie. His Dundreary is true comedy, not farce, as fools fancy. He is as grave as a judge over it, and in that excellent quality a successor to Liston. He plays nothing downright ill, except his first act of ‘David Garrick.’ His immobility of countenance during the scene with the merchant is false

and feeble in itself, and singularly out of character—David being historically famous for mobility of countenance and varying expression; whereas this actor plays that scene with the face of a wooden dolt, though the lines give him every opportunity of changing his expression from grave to gay, from lively to severe.”

Space forbids our handling in detail every member of that brilliant theatrical circle whereof Charles Reade might have boasted, *quorum pars magna fui*. He writhed under Mr. Burnand's euphuistic satire, yet preserved a genial epistle of his, commencing with “No Larks,” as a friendly memory of the buried hatchet. Boddam Donne he defines as a ripe scholar and a good friend; Miss Furtado he praises for her beauty, but blames for an excessive tremolo. Horace Wigan earned the epithet “a dry old chip;” on Benjamin Webster he was even more severe: “an admirable actor,” he calls him, “when he happens to have studied the words.” To Mr. John Clayton he is more civil: “Actor, and a promising one. This young man gets up wonderfully well. As a rule that part of the art is not learned early in an actor's career. I declare that he must be a painter, he varies his head and face so finely.” Miss Ada Cavendish is “an actress of some power, very handsome, a clever woman.” Mr. Kendall, “a good actor.” Mr. R. Buchanan, “a very clever fellow.” Of Mr. Hare he always spoke as of the very truest gentleman who ever enacted the rôle of *gentleman* on the stage; and, like the rest of the world, he avowed himself an admirer of that brilliant yet brief meteor, Miss Ada Isaacs Menken, as thus: “A clever woman, with beautiful eyes—very dark blue. A bad actress, but made a hit by playing Mazeppa in tights. She played one scene in ‘Black-eyed Susan’ with true feeling. A triga-

mist, or quadrigamist, her last husband, I believe, was John Heenan, the prize-fighter. I saw him fight Tom King. Menken talked well and was very intelligent. She spoiled her looks off the stage with white lead, or whatever it is these idiots of women wear. She did not rouge, but played some devilry with her glorious eyes, which altogether made her spectral. She wrote poetry. It was as bad as other people's—would have been worse if it could. *Requiescat in pace.* Goodish heart. Loose conduct. Gone!"

A lover of pictures, Charles Reade was perhaps too dogmatic in his ideas to assimilate much with painters. He has written of Sir Frederick Leighton that he is one of the best-read men of the age. He described Sir J. E. Millais as the English Titian, and Mr. O'Neill won his favor. In his last years he gave a commission to an Italian lady to paint—on the lines of Gainesborough's Blue-boy—a portrait of his great nephew, Master Scott Reade; and was annoyed that the hanging committee failed to recognize its merit. Frankly, he was by no means easy for a painter to please, and in his musical notions approximated Philistinism. He cared for none but broad effects, and upheld Handel as the Shakespeare of music. Art, from his point of view, is not for higher natures, but for all; and what transcends the comprehension of the average human being and fails therefore to influence, was, from his point of view, valueless. Hence he underrated the genius of composers, and had few musical friends.

Victor Hugo appreciated his genius, none the less, perhaps, because he wrote in French as well as in English, so also did Brisebarre, Maquet, and Zola. In his guard-book is a very touching letter from Hugo, ending, "*Je salue votre noble esprit.*" In this volume also he cherished the

autographs of "my invaluable friend," Rev. J. Gibson, minister of Kirkhope, of Hain Friswell, with a sketch of Mrs. Seymour, Lords Hartington and Newry, Mr. W. H. Smith, the poet Southey, Lord Townshend—a very benevolent gentleman—Artemus Ward, Mr. Smith—"The Prince of Publishers"—Dean Gaisford, Mr. Hollingshead, Archbishop Sumner, Mr. James Fields, of Boston—"and a very clever writer, let me tell you"—General Meredith Read—"my American cousin"—James Lambert—"The Hero and the Martyr"—Mr. John Blackwood, Miss Dickens, Mr. Dicey, George Vining, Mrs. Charles Matthews, Buckstone, Bernal Osborne, Webster, Mr. Trübner, "worthy Mr. Plimsoll, who deserves a civic crown," Baron Grant, Alderman Mechi, Mr. C. Thorne, the American actor—"with an admirable gift of representing suppressed emotion"—Mr. Henry Morford, an American journalist—"I think he once told me he had had eleven bones broken, first and last"—Baron Tauchnitz, Mr. James Rice, Shirley Brooks,—dating from "Noah's Ark, second deluge"—Mrs. Lehmann, a daughter of Robert Chambers—on the death of Charles Dickens—Dr. Bandinel, the Bodleian Librarian at Oxford, Mr. Henry Matthews, Q. C., Alfred Wigan, Mr. Forbes Robertson, Reverdy Johnson, Lord Shaftesbury, and last, not least, a letter from his venerable mother in her ninetieth year. The book may fitly be described as a curiosity of epistolary literature.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DEAD-SEA FRUIT.

It was on a lovely June afternoon in 1879 that a cab drove up hurriedly to the portal of a house in Claverton Street, and from thence emerged a tall, handsome gentleman, white bearded, but erect and picturesque, bearing in his hands several colossal volumes. In another minute he had ascended—rather breathlessly—the staircase, and greeted affectionately his niece, Mrs. Compton Reade.

“You are the musician of the family,” he said—this lady studied under Otto Goldsmith at the Royal Academy—“and I have come to requisition your services.”

The colossal volumes proved to be “*Les Chansons de Noël*,” a superb collection of all the Yuletide music of Fair France, carols, whose origin is lost in the obscurity of remote ages, tender, sweet, and romantic, if at times crude as the Gregorian plain-song or the ancient Greek modes.

“We are to have a carol sung in the snow,” he said, “with harp accompaniment; and now to select one.”

The reference, we need not add, was to his forthcoming drama, entitled “*Drink*”—already in rehearsal at the Princess’ Theatre.

His niece’s fingers and wits were soon at work. To make a selection from some hundreds of pastoral *chansons*, was no easy task. A quick instinct, however, and an eye trained to read music at sight, rapidly winnowed

those utterly unsuitable, whether from peculiarity of rhythm or lack of melody. After about three hours' stiff work the choice was reduced to three, and eventually a strain selected, which, though simple, has all the intense charm of true pathos.

"The very thing," cried Charles Reade, ecstasically.

It was a curious coincidence that Gounod's "*Messe Solennelle*" was at the moment unknown in this country, if written at all. One among the gems—perhaps *the gem par excellence* of that sublime composition, is "*The Benedictus*;" and we need say no more than that the resemblance between that dulcet melody and the "*Chanson de Noël*" selected by Mrs. Compton Reade for the snow scene in "*Drink*" is, to say the least, remarkable.

Having further begged for a march from her facile pen for the *entr'acte* music, Charles Reade insisted that his niece should attend the final rehearsal. "They will make a bungle of it if they can," he pleaded. Accordingly we all appeared at the Princess' Theatre on the Saturday afternoon, the piece being set down for Whit-Monday. There was the usual confusion: the property-man invisible; the minor players, apparently, by no means perfect in their parts; positions to be studied; while the lessee wanted a harmonium in lieu of a harp, which would have wrecked the effect of our lovely "*Chanson de Noël*." They manage anything vocal, outside the range of noise and clap-trap, infamously on the stage, having no more idea of part-singing than pigs. However, somehow the rehearsal was got through; but Charles Reade, who dined with us, seemed fairly out of spirits.

"Seymour is ill," he moaned, "and for the first time can't be present at my first night. A bad omen!"

We who had witnessed what Mr. Warner could do, and

foresaw the surprise in store for the audience, tried to cheer him. In vain.

Monday came. The house was crammed—never fuller, if so full. There had been a little difference behind the scenes between the two ladies who, on the lines of the play, were bound to souse each other in the wash-house scene, neither being ardently ambitious of a drenching, yet each feeling morally convinced that the other ought to submit to immersion. If both these admirable people shirked that terrible ordeal, the curtain would fall for the first act on a *coup manque*. We watched with breathless interest.

Jam satis. One of them escaped the soapsuds, but the other caught her avalanche full. That was enough for the gallery. The spectacle of one of her majesty's servants dripping on the stage with *real* water exhilarated a Whit-Monday gallery. There was a roar for encore.

From that point the success of the play was assured. The audience having got itself into a good temper, became first fascinated, then thrilled; and when Mr. Warner enacted the incurable drunkard battling with temptation, yet ever yielding, and at last descending, as it were, to a living hell, every one felt that this was not a play merely for laughter—it was horrible to the verge of disgust; but its realism approached the sublime.

Those who had seen "L'Assommoir" at the Ambigu Theatre, confessed at once that the English adapter, in eliminating three fourths of the filth, had idealized magnificently the French author's drama; and when Mr. Gooch, the lessee, came on to tell how this version was neither a piracy nor a theft, but produced with the sanction of M. Zola, who shared in the results, there remained nothing to dim the lustre of the triumph, except the one sad fact of

Mrs. Seymour's absence, and that to Charles Reade spoiled it all. At the moment he may have striven to lull his apprehensions; yet because his great friend was lying ill he could not enjoy it. "Drink" was infinitely his greatest success in the metropolis, from a pecuniary point of view. Thousands came rolling in where before he had received but tens. He recouped himself for a fraction of those vast losses by theatrical speculation which he himself set down at an almost fabulous total, for he shared the venture with Mr. Gooch, who proved a most excellent partner. But the turn of the wheel came too late. It seemed almost to mock his misery.

More than a year previous to this date—indeed, as early as March, 1878—we find in his diary a long account of Mrs. Seymour's ailments. "I have nearly lost poor Seymour," he writes, "by internal gout. She had a month of agony followed by long prostration. It appears to have been caused by many worries, and by applying cold water to an attack of podagra. The gout was cured thereby in a few hours, but the malady resented this and crept to the vitals. Her predecessor, Betterton, is said to have killed himself in forty-eight hours by this treatment. He was implored to play for some friend's benefit while laboring under gout—got rid of it with cold water, acted, and died.

"Seymour's natural inability to eat was against her. She was exhausted by pain, and not supported by nutriment. Tried homœopathy first; then allopathy. The gout was on one occasion relieved by belladonna, administered by me, at her request, *not* in a large dose.

"She was attended twice a day by Quain, *who refused all fee*. Her illness showed this, at all events, what love and respect she is held in by all who know her, women especially, who love her because she is singularly free from

the vices of her sex, vanity, and malicious babbling. I took her down to Brighton, but it did her little good; indeed, she had a slight relapse there. Since then she has had short attacks, but she has returned to the theatre."

By the summer of 1879 this terrible disease, warded off only by violent medicines of the kind that cure only to kill, had gained upon her. If she had had her way it is tolerably certain that "Drink" would neither have been written nor played; and it was her scepticism as regards its success that helped to damp Charles Reade's spirits. When, moreover, the verdict went in favor of the play unanimously, she was too ill to rejoice. Her countenance changed. The intense sufferings she underwent warned her of the approaching end. There was life in her body, but no hope.

The writer of these lines essayed to cheer her—albeit ineffectually. She begged for new-laid eggs from the country—and these he was able to bring her—yet when they came she could not touch them.

"She is a dying woman," moaned Charles Reade—in *her hearing*.

That, alas, was true.

For a long time past this lady, to the outside world a Bohemian pure and simple, had been engaged in works of charity—unknown to a soul but herself. She had saved a little money; and, oddly enough, though never a church-goer, sympathized very acutely with the struggles of the inferior clergy—as they are termed, work in this world being a symptom of inferiority—of the Church of England, who were laboring among the London poor on stipends such as noblemen's flunkys would have rejected with contempt. She had a very sharp eye of her own, and could tell accurately whether a man in a black coat

was a wolf in sheep's clothing, or genuine; and her plan was to forward small sums—all she could afford—anonymously to the latter variety of parson. Like many of her type she focussed her mind's eye on the philanthropic aspect of Christianity, and further deemed the poor gentleman who endures in silence more worthy of support than the howling proletarian or yelping mendicant. Perhaps she was in a measure right—albeit charity should know no class. Certainly her benevolence did her great credit, and afforded indirect evidence of a latent belief in religious principles, wherewith otherwise she had but little affinity. Feeling the sands running out, and possibly remembering with some compunction the uncompromising verities enforced by her saintly brother-in-law, the minister of Kirkhope, she startled yet gratified Charles Reade by requesting him to bring a clergyman to her bedside.

Here, however, a difficulty presented itself *in limine*. They did not know their vicar, and the probabilities were strongly against a total stranger bearing comfort to a dying woman. At this juncture a happy thought flashed across Charles Reade's mind. He had a slight acquaintance with the Vicar of Willesden. In him he recognized a gentleman of warm sympathies and liberal, though strictly orthodox, views. Thither he went as a suppliant.

Not in vain. Mr. Wharton was compelled, by the rule of the Church, to ask the permission of the incumbent, in whose parish Albert Gate is situate, to visit Mrs. Seymour. This being promptly and kindly given, the dying sufferer was consoled in her last moments by a gentle and earnest voice. With her Charles Reade received the Sacrament for the first time after a lapse of many years; and she passed away calmly, her last words being commendatory

of those among Charles Reade's relatives who, in her judgment, loved him best.

It was an awful blow. No words that could be penned are able to describe its force and intensity. To tell the tale of the mighty agony of a majestic spirit would need the genius of an Æschylus, or the brain that could conceive a Lear. The man's mute dignity was heartrending to witness. His pathetic eye seemed to say, "Look at a broken heart." Brother Compton, his playmate, companion, and counsellor, was at once by his side. Mr. Liston Reade hurried across from Germany. We do not exaggerate when we affirm that the gravest anxiety weighed on all at the moment as to whether he would survive the bitter ordeal of the funeral, for he was not only stunned and bruised in mind, but in body also so out of health as to render a collapse more than likely.

By the kindness of Mr. Wharton a last resting-place for Mrs. Seymour was provided at Willesden. She begged to be buried in a churchyard, and not in a cemetery—a very proper request, and quite in consonance with common-sense, inasmuch as the future of our cemeteries teems with very unpleasant possibilities. Her desire was of course law, and she lies undisturbed at Willesden.

The funeral demonstrated precisely Charles Reade's estimate of her popularity. There were at least six times as many theatrical people gathered round her grave as around that of Charles Reade, five years later. The whole profession seemed to be present. She was of course one of them, on the same plane; whereas, if we may say so without offence, Charles Reade towered above them, as the eternal firmament above the ephemeral butterfly. Their hearts were more with her than with him. She was their comrade, and it was well they assembled *en masse* to honor her.

The scene was painful in the extreme. Supported by the loving arm of his brother Compton, Charles Reade tottered behind the bier, his bosom heaving with sobs, his frame bent. He was almost beside himself with emotion; and had not his brother gripped him firmly, would have flung himself on the coffin, for the grave was open, and the sarcophagus of Mull granite, now shrouding it, had not been erected. The writer has performed the rites of the Church many hundred times, yet never has taken part in a ceremonial so pitifully tragical. It was curious to note how the actors and actresses, accustomed as they are to simulate mental torture, seemed to recoil from this exhibition of it in stern reality. He passed through their ranks—and they were all familiar faces—as one in a dream—rather we should say, as one expecting to die.

Death all but supervened shortly afterwards. The action of his heart became irregular, and to such an extent that, but for the genius of Mr. Goodsall, whose incessant care exceeded all praise, it must have ceased. His brother shifted his quarters to Albert Gate, acted as his secretary and amanuensis, strove gently to distract his attention from the open wound, and, as all will testify, proved a lenitive influence. The drainage, unfortunately, of Albert Gate was in so defective a condition that he fell ill, and his place was subsequently supplied by various members of the family. The home, however, where in Mrs. Seymour's society the sufferer had passed so many days of happiness and contentment, was in itself an aggravation of his sorrow. Every chair, table, book, reminded him of his pain; and in the end he could bear the sight of these memories no more, and moved to his brother's residence between Shepherd's Bush and Acton.

"I have lost," he writes, "the one creature who thought

more of my interest, health, and happiness than her own—a poor old man of sixty-five! Unable to live alone in the house where I was once so happy with her, and unable to find a companion I could endure in her home, I have for a long time slept at my brother's house and only visited my own house for three or four hours every day. The drive in and out has, I think, been good for my health; and the society of my nieces, who are very kind, has at all events often broken my deep sense of solitude and utter desolation. Even in that house I have many paroxysms of grief, but I have also intermissions. This day I have mustered up resolution to sleep here" (at Albert Gate). "I am sitting in the studio, a large room, silent as the grave, though in the heart of London. The great simple fireplace she planned to heat this cold north room does its work nobly; but, ah me! Ah me! Her seat by that fireplace is empty, empty forever!

"March 16, 1880.—Alone in the world this six months, after pining to a skeleton" (too true!) "for the loss of my darling, and two or three ineffectual attempts to live in the house where she made me happy. I come over this day from Coningham Road to try and spend a night here. My heart is like lead. I no longer ignore God, as I used. On the contrary, I pray hard, and give money to poor people, and try to be God's servant. But, oh, it is so hard, and impalpable, and the world so full of vanity by comparison.

"Yet my only true intermissions of misery have been while doing a little act of good, or communing with my friend, the Rev. Charles Graham, who is an *Apostle*; and I can believe that God, pitying my tears and prayers, has given me his affectionate friendship to console me and temper the wind. Oh, to think that for five-and-twenty

years I was blessed with Laura Seymour, and that now for the rest of my pilgrimage she is quite, quite gone. Not one look from her sweet eyes—not one smile— Oh, my heart! my heart! I am wretched. I have lost my love of the world. I have not acquired the love of God. And, I have no companion. My brother Compton tried to live with me and could not. The beastly drains made him so ill; he nearly died.

“My dogs, and the portrait of my lost darling—they are all I have. Ah, would to God I could add that I have my Saviour.

“I believe he is here, and pities me, but from want of faith I cannot feel his presence. O God, increase my faith!

“Two great successes at the Princess’ Theatre—‘Never Too Late to Mend’ and ‘Drink’—have improved my fortune; but I really think have added to my grief—especially the latter, which my darling never could enjoy for pain and suffering, though she would ask for the receipts and be pleased in the intervals of her pain.

“My poor lamb has also left me all her savings—my tears stream afresh when I think of it. Every shilling of that sacred money is devoted to God and the poor, and even in that cause it is wormwood and agony to me to spend it.

“God’s will be done. I am very wretched; but, once more, God’s will be done.

“August 11, 1880.—That attempt to live on in my own house failed, and I returned to Coningham Road” (his brother Compton’s residence) “to sleep.

“Between that date and this I visited Ipsden and Margate, where God enabled me to be of service in spiritual things to my dying brother” (William). “Also to St. Leonards, where my old friends the S——e’s received me coldly;

and I soon left, feeling more than ever that I had lost my one constant and unselfish friend.

"I am now making another attempt to live here" (at Albert Gate), "my fourth or fifth. I have kept my diary more regularly than this, and written myself down the poor reptile I am in all that pertains to godliness.

"I write this in my studio. It looks north, and is always more depressing than my drawing-room. Mem.: to work in my drawing-room, until I can stand this large grotto better.

"Oct. 16, 1880.—I remember that when I was a little boy everybody noticed my extraordinary helplessness. My dear sister Julia noticed it particularly at Sandgate, seeing how feebly I got off the coach, like one that expected to be lifted down. Once I fell off a coach into a man's arms, as I was getting up.

"Of late years I used to hang fire at any good or useful thing, until *she* helped and drove me. I could not put my papers to rights on the table without *her* help.

"I can't do it, now she is gone, without help. I begin, but cannot effect it. It is the same in the things of God. I wish in my weak way to serve him, and do good to his people. But I hang fire. I don't trouble about it. I wait till the deserving poor shall seek me—which is just what the *deserving* poor don't do. Impetuous in all tempers and desires, I am so languid in good.

"Here is all prepared for Laura Seymour's dole, yet I lack energy to go and draw the money and complete. Death, or loss of reason, will, I fear, take me postponing some good thing. Why don't I trouble in good acts, as *she* did?

"Why? Because my heart is not with God. 'Oh, quicken thou me according to thy word!'"

These sorrowful extracts reveal the writer's mind. In the first poignant ecstacy of bereavement he had leaned helplessly on the brother who had been throughout nearest and dearest to him. There he found such sympathy as was helpful—so far, at all events, as human warmth can help a broken heart. Throughout the long nights his nieces watched by his bedside, for the paroxysms he alludes to were violent and overwhelming, and would arouse the entire household. The suggestion on the part of one who has publicly claimed the honor of Charles Reade's friendship, that he was suffering from monomania, may be dismissed as inexact if not insulting. Acute sorrow cannot be designated mania, even though it be associated with religious emotion. In evidence of this we may point to the sentence wherein the sufferer dreads lest he should lose his reason—the strain being so great. Such fear is in itself *rational*, and proves mental balance. No madman ever yet feared that he might be going mad—indeed, the insane believe firmly in their sanity. Here, as elsewhere, the gentleman in question has forgotten what is due to the memory of one with whom he is anxious to assert the tie of friendship.

It was his brother Compton who introduced him to the divine whom he styles an apostle. Opinions differ; and the estimate one man adopts of another depends largely on the standpoint of each. We do not expect a licensed victualler to uphold a temperance lecturer as a model of all the virtues, nor an experimental physiologist to bless the antivivisection society. Making every allowance for the antagonism subsistent between an actor and a representative of Calvinism, it was hardly equitable on the part of the *soi-disant* friendly pen which gibbeted Charles Reade as a lunatic to malign his spiritual consoler as an

obscure Nonconformist. The Rev. Charles Graham may not enjoy the notoriety of a player of the third, or the celebrity of a player of the first, rank, but he happens to be the recognized representative of the established Church of Scotland in London, and as such is not wholly unknown; while on the other side of that thin dividing line, the river Tweed, he is as much of a Conformist as our gracious Sovereign Lady herself. It may have been Charles Reade's weakness of intellect, but he certainly expressed himself astonished—speaking from an Oxonian point of view—at this clergyman's storehouse of learning. Mr. Graham's age, his intellect, his character, his earnest eloquence—above all the signal service he rendered a great and sorrowing soul—might have shielded him from a stolid sneer—and that too in a magazine issuing from New Burlington Street. But enough. By all, except perhaps the more lubricious element of the dramatic profession, the written encomium of the author will be held to outweigh the censure of *Temple Bar*; and, apart from Charles Reade, a communion which boasts the foremost theologian of this age—Professor Drummond—can very well afford to ignore this type of assailant. Unable, as he puts it, after reiterated attempts, to endure either the solitude or associations of Albert Gate; and needing, over and above the unremitting attentions of Mr. Liston Reade, constant care—a task for which his nieces were by experience well qualified—being also anxious for the society occasionally of his good friend, Mr. Graham, Charles Reade proposed to his brother what may be termed an act of mutual self-denial. He had Albert Gate on his hands, but would not live there. His brother had built for himself a model residence, suited to the requirements of his family. This last was hardly spacious enough to meet the necessities of both brothers.

He proposed, therefore, that they should each give up his house—take on long lease a pair of semi-detached villas, nearer London, and by removing the wall of partition between the gardens create one large lawn. After sundry alterations this plan took effect, and the brothers moved to their two residences, *dos à dos*, but communicating by means of a veranda.

The sacrifice was all on one side; but the elder brother had the profound satisfaction of witnessing its happy results. Charles Reade was aroused to interest by the excitement of moving. A foe to paint, and a lover of varnish, he had all his doors and wainscots scraped, and displayed the grain of the wood. He bustled about, fitted up his new home with every comfort, and actually began to put on flesh. He started a menagerie of Belgian hares, which fraternized quite comfortably with Mrs. Seymour's pair of toy terriers; and the passers-by on the tram-cars wondered to behold what seemed to be a warren in a London suburb. In the summer tennis occupied a large slice of the day; and his relations, at all events, hoped he had settled down calmly to a new life—or rather to have reverted to that of his boyhood and young manhood. Mr. Graham was his chief consolation beyond his own precincts, and within them he seemed tranquillized by the devoted affection of his brother.

A public charge of monomania—religious monomania, it is styled, but the adjective hardly qualifies the indictment—having been preferred against Charles Reade, we deem it right to adduce evidence beyond that of ourselves to demonstrate its falsity. Mr. Graham writes, "The statement of Mr. Charles Reade being 'a monomaniac on the subject of religion' is utterly without foundation. Monomania, according to the definition of medical sci-

ence, means 'disordered or erroneous persuasions of the mind on one subject.' I conversed with Mr. Reade more than one hundred times on the subject of religion, and never detected in him any 'disordered or erroneous persuasion' in relation to it. On the contrary, I have always been impressed with the soundness of his judgment on every subject within the wide range of our conversations. More than a dozen times we met at my house, and entered into conversation on religious and other questions *with medical men* and ministers of the gospel, and all were charmed with his superior intelligence and with the soundness of his views, as well as the sincerity of his heart. If my esteemed friend was a monomaniac on the subject of religion, I have never met a man of sound mind upon it."

This is witness. Now for its corroboration. Charles Reade writes to Mr. Graham as follows:

"I have never been downright ill since my darling died until Monday night last. Then my chronic cough became very violent, with headache and depression. My brother, who has kept me company in this sad home, left me; and I was not only ill, but quite alone, in a house where hitherto a loving nurse had hovered over me in sickness. This overpowered me so that, I am ashamed to say, I prayed to die.

"In sheer terror I have left home, and come to my brother for a day or two.

"Alas, I am not Christian, but Faint-heart; or, rather, like Christiana, I need a Great Heart to cling to in this bitter and complicated trial.

"Forgive the egotism which intrudes its woes upon you. Those who live for others are soon singled out and taken advantage of.

"Yours, gratefully and ashamed,

CHARLES READE."

Again:

"DEAR MR. GRAHAM,—I was sorry not to see you on the eve of your journey; however, I hope my good wishes caught you flying, and that you are being refreshed in body and spirit by this visit to your native country. You were certainly being overworked here, and some relief of tension necessary.

‘Neque semper arcum
Tendit Apostle.’

“Your return, however, will be welcome—both to the many who, like myself, love you in private, and to the congregation of Avenue Road chapel.

“Looking forward to your return, I am, my dear friend and consoler,
“Ever yours affectionately, CHARLES READE.”

Again, in reference to the above-mentioned move:

“DEAR MR. GRAHAM,—Cough gone, and pain in my chest much abated, but this is the 14th day of close imprisonment. I am weary of inaction and confinement.

“Do you remember the character of Mr. Weary o’ the World, in the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress?’ I seem to myself to resemble him more than I do Christian, or Faithful, or Hopeful.

“We have offered Mr. B—— £120 a year for his two houses on a long lease. Thereupon he sent his agent to ask my brother to call on him. My brother excused himself from doing that. Then Mr. B—— wrote and declined.

“Till this letter came I was beginning to think it was ordained I should leave my old abode, and all associations not worth cherishing, and begin life again—at sixty-seven—on the Uxbridge Road.

“Now I hardly know what to think.

“At the request of a lady in Melrose Gardens I sent a trifle to a poor clergyman in Wales. He has not acknowledged receipt. Should be glad to know whether he had got it. I do not like to write and ask him.

“It seemed odd not to acknowledge a donation.

“Yours affectionately, CHARLES READE.”

The above letters, written at long intervals, fail to give the smallest support to the slander of monomania. The next will be read by some with contempt, by others with approbation; but by all, except the most exacerbated, with respect for the writer’s sincerity:

“8 CLARENDON VILLAS, MARGATE.

“DEAR MR. GRAHAM,—I arrived here at seven, and found my brother” (William Barrington) “pale and emaciated, and by loss of teeth somewhat

inarticulate. He felt my coming, which was a comfort, for the sight of the place has set my heart bleeding as freely as ever. I did propose to go to Hastings to-morrow, but I have postponed leaving this place for the following reasons: here is a dying Christian surrounded by living Christians. Yet death and eternity have never been mentioned during all this sickness." (We have reason to believe that here *he was in error*—we give his letter simply as an index of his mind, and with apologies to those whom with well-meant zeal he takes to task.) "All for want of a little courage. Now, as I earnestly hope people will talk about nothing else in my dying ears, I have taken upon me, though a very poor Christian compared with others in this house, to break through this unhappy reticence. I have spoken to him of his death as probable. I have examined him as to his condition, and read to him a selection from the service called 'The Visitation of the Sick;' and I find him so humble, penitent, and full of faith that I have proposed to him to take the Communion with me after preparation. His parish priest, who is zealous, will be at his bedside at four this afternoon, and so I do hope the ice will be broken.

"This will postpone my visit to St. Leonards. With kind love to you and yours,
 Yours very sincerely,
 CHARLES READE.

"Lovely weather—sunset a hundred colors!"

The above offers a complete vindication, except to those jaundiced minds who, like dumb, driven cattle, focus their eyes on the ground, and, themselves never looking upward, decry all religious emotion as insanity, and all religious conviction as imbecility.

But enough of small slander. Suffice it, that during the most acute period, when his friends, who were eye-witnesses of such torture as only the grandest mind could endure without lesion, had only too grave cause to apprehend the loss of his reason, he was as yet a stranger to Mr. Graham. When, subsequently, he came within range of that divine's beneficent influence, his spirit by degrees calmed; and never during life was his brain more cool, more judg-matical, better tempered to endure the strain of external phenomena.

Of his great philanthropic work between the years 1879–1883, it is not for us to speak particularly. What he had inherited from Mrs. Seymour he distributed with his own hand—and much also of his own small fortune, his donations in one year amounting to the large total of £3000. Cases have been publicly cited of his delicate liberality. They could be multiplied—almost indefinitely.

On one appeal for alms—from an actor—he wrote:

“Fatal procrastination! I meant to have given this poor fellow the money he asked, but he died before I could reach him—confound it all!”

Was that *monomania*?

CHAPTER XXX.

VIA CALCANDA.

AT the close of 1881 William Barrington Reade passed away; his eldest son, Winwood, had succumbed some six years previously to disease contracted in Ashantee; his successor, therefore, as Squire of Ipsden, was his second son, Henry St. John Reade, successively head boy of Tonbridge, scholar of University College, Oxford, captain of the Oxford eleven, and first-class man. This gentleman, who married the granddaughter of Dr. Vincent, Dean of Westminster, had chosen the scholastic profession, and galvanized the Grocers Company's group of schools at Oundle, from a paltry handful of thirty boys to a big public school nearly ten times that number. On attaining the dignity of squire he, however, amidst loud regrets, resigned his post of pedagogue, and organized a huge housewarming at Ipsden.

Thirty-two descendants of venerable John Reade met on that happy occasion. Of this company Charles Reade was, of course, the cynosure. Ancient rustics, who retained vivid recollections of "Master Chawse," came to pay their respects to the silver-bearded author. There was a cricket match improvised, and other homely festivities; while, to tell the boys and girls something of their origin, the drawing-room tables were covered with the records of the Reades of a remote past. There, in black letter, a *terra incognita* to the eyes of all but the instruct-

ed, were the title-deeds of the manors conveyed by one Andlett of Abingdon, reputed to be King Hal's barber, to William Reade of Beedon. Three hundred and fifty years had passed since then, with many vicissitudes for the race. There, too, was the inventory of Catherine Reade's furniture, when in the reign of Edward VI. she brought her husband, a certain Mr. Thomas Vachell, of papistical proclivities, to live at Ipsden. There were the letters of the cavalier Edward when locked up in Oxford Castle for debt, and much of strange interest, though of later date.

"Alas!" sighed the successful author, as he perused these records, "that I should have done so little for the family!"

The said family happens to be one of the very few remaining which held a territorial position antecedently to the Wars of the Roses. Mr. Evelyn Shirley omitted it from his catalogue—the murderous maniac, who represented the senior branch having, just before the publication of the said book, aliened Beedon, which had been in the possession of the family for more than five centuries, and with that the ruins of Barton Court, a hallowed memorial of the bravery of Sir Compton Reade. Mr. Shirley, however—although, of course, he would not include Ipsden in his list, it having been purchased a few years after the arbitrary chronological limit he fixed—omitted to take into account the estate at Taynton, which at the moment remained the property of Sir John Chandos Reade, and had been in the family *before* the reign of Henry VI. There was cause enough for Charles Reade's deep-heaved sigh. Beedon had gone to a banker, and Dunstewe, renamed—in Charles II.'s time, by Sir John Reade of Bocket Barton, in honor of the greater Barton which lay in ruins—to

a brewer. Bocket had passed to the descendants of Sir John Bocket's land-agent; and Shipton, the royal residence, with the "ancient inheritance of Taynton," by the will of the said homicidal Sir John Chandos, to his butler. Boarstal was the property of strangers, and thus, of all the manors, Ipsden alone remained. Little by little in the lapse of centuries the race, once so opulent and powerful, had been dwindling into insignificance; no marvel, therefore, Charles Reade regretted that, like his father, he had avoided a political career, and thereby lost the chance of rehabilitating the old name.

It was a bright gathering for the children, yet to the seniors sorrowful. At the open doors of the old house there seemed to enter familiar faces and forms—the venerable squire and his courtly wife; sister Ellinor; young Allen Gardiner, Julia's handsome son; Anna, doomed, as Mrs. R. A. J. Drummond, to face the fire of the mutineers in India. The shadow of sorrow seemed almost to pass over the scene in anticipation, for the reign of Henry St. John Reade at Ipsden was destined to be but brief, and the sounds of rejoicing but the prelude of the death wail, to be heard only too soon.

It was now three summers since the decease of Mrs. Seymour had, as it were, dashed the pen from Charles Reade's hand. Messrs. Scribner, through Mr. Warne, offered him £4000 for a novel—and his nephew pressed him to write fiction in a serious vein—but the answer was, "Why should I?" The theatrical people came buzzing about him with the design of inveigling him in some speculation, but to them he was deaf. He had, as he phrased it to Mr. Graham, *another Master*, and his self-imposed task of almoner-general cheered and invigorated him. It is a fact that, as he played tennis on the lawn at Ipsden,

every one could but note how, to all appearance lastingly, he had recovered from the effects of that blow which had been all but fatal. His face had filled out. He was no longer lean, but well clothed with adipose tissue. His spirits had revived. He enlivened the table with racy anecdotes. Three years had given him a measure of rejuvenescence. -

Had he continued thus, it is not too much to affirm, he would have been with us to - day. As it fell out, the new orb of existence waxed only to wane.

He allowed himself, contrary to his better judgment, to be over-persuaded into a dramatic collaboration, which eventually led up to a theatrical speculation. It is superfluous to hazard a criticism of the drama called "Love and Money," produced at the Adelphi Theatre ; inasmuch as whatever credit belongs to the play must be set down to the score of Mr. Pettit. Suffice it, that the excitement of the stage, its surroundings and associations, injured irrecoverably a delicate constitution. He became irritable and restless. Mr. Graham testifies that he was unhappy, if not remorseful; for although he always stoutly maintained that the drama ought to exercise a regenerating influence on society, and tend to the mental and moral exaltation of man, he could, when in the mood, be none the less severe on the environment of playhouses and their "lubricity," as he has emphatically termed it in his guard-book. For him the theatre possessed the quality of strong, of overpowering, magic. It was cruel kindness to apply that wand in order to drag him against his conscience whither he would not. However, so it was to be.

From a pecuniary point of view he gained nothing, even when the receipts of the novel, based on the drama, are added to the sums he received—less loss—by its represen-

tations in England and America. The sum paid him by Messrs. Tillotson, of Bolton, for the issue of "Love and Money" * in serial form did not, by any means, cover his disbursements to a single actress. It may be a hard reflection, but it is a true one, that this Barmecidal reversion to the theatre cost him money, labor, time, temper, peace of mind, health, and life itself.

Yet in spite of so ill-advised an attempt to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, and certain outspoken remonstrances from his brother Compton as to the folly of all this, his mind never faltered in its loyalty to those who were true to him. He may have neglected Mr. Graham's advice, yet his love for that sterling friend remained unshaken. He gave reiterated assurances of his deep affection for those near relatives who had devoted themselves to him. Soon, too, his old ailments returned with redoubled vehemence, and he needed sorely all their solicitude. The racking cough became his constant companion. He fell away to a skeleton. Food seemed poison.

* Afterwards issued, both in America for Messrs. Harper's *Bazar*, and in *Temple Bar*, under the title "A Perilous Secret." Mr. W. F. Tillotson, who was approached originally by Charles Reade's nephew in 1875, in reference to "The Woman-Hater," endeavored for many years to persuade him to write for his syndicate. In reply to one among many overtures, in May, 1878, Charles Reade wrote: "Dear Sir, I am at home every morning till two, and very happy to talk to you about anything but novels. The public is an ass, and does not understand mine. So I am not in a humor to waste time and labor and skill." Eventually Mr. Tillotson was equally surprised and gratified by Charles Reade offering him the serial use of "Love and Money," provided terms could be arranged—as actually occurred—with Messrs. Harper & Brothers for simultaneous publication in America. It was a singular coincidence that the first and last novel of Charles Reade should have been published in this country by the eminent firm of R. Bentley & Son, of New Burlington Street.

There was at times a look of death visible on his face—albeit his spirits varied, and his niece remarked, with simple truth, “Uncle Charles is so very young.” Elasticity of spirits, however, was neutralized by spells of melancholy, coupled with a strange restlessness. He had no idea that he was dying, yet hardly cared for life. When the writer wished him happy returns of his birthday, he painfully startled his well-wisher with, “Belay that, my boy !” It was a pitiable change, more especially to those who knew only too well what had been the cause.

Towards the close of 1883 he resolved to escape the London fog—his enemy, though by no means the worst one he had—and to that end roamed abroad, attended only by a secretary. It was the wish of his family that one of their number should accompany him, but he preferred solitude. At first the change did him good, and he wrote to his nephew—the writer—then resident at Elton Rectory, to invite himself during the ensuing spring, begging especially for some trout-fishing. Soon, however, the dark tide began to roll, and he drifted on its billows to realize the nearness of the bourne whereunto he was hastening.

Under date Cannes, Jan. 1, 1884, he writes thus:

“In March, 1883, I nearly died of bronchitis, which with me is chronic, and has paroxysms. For the first time was unable to eat.

“When I got about again, little spasms came on in stomach or bowels about one o’clock. I stopped them at first by eating a little.

“But, by and by, they came on at all hours and were painful. I lost flesh and appetite, and took to sipping milk to stop them. A month or two more and they became frequent and tormenting.

“Soon I found myself with no appetite for meat, and

drinking milk instead of tea. After several months of it, wasted to a skeleton, I left England. Journeys made me worse, and when I reached Cannes, early in December, I was in agonies day and night. A paroxysm of bronchitis fell on me, and I felt myself in danger. But Providence sent me a good friend, though a humble one, in the *femme de chambre*. I cut down the fever that hitherto accompanied my cough, and, weakened as I was by pain, I pulled through. She administered hot linseed plasters for my agony.

“A fortnight ago I gave up meat altogether, and my torments began to retire directly. Now I often have a day without a pang.

“Present diet: 8 A.M., tea, nearly all milk, two poached eggs. Brandt’s jelly or else cream. About 11, a raw egg and milk. At 1, pea-soup, strong of the meat. About 3, milk. 5, strong soup—lentils. 7, powdered biscuits and lots of cream. At night, whenever I wake, raw egg and milk. I often eat eight raw eggs in the twenty-four hours. Weak in body, and rather weak and desultory in mind, bringing up a good deal of mucus, sometimes cough, but no violent pains. Three weeks ago I thought I had a schirrus, a something inside me, and must die. Now I think I shall live, though of course I am always in danger of bronchitis.

“Diet this day, Jan. 2: At 8, poached eggs, cream, hot milk. At 11, eggs and milk. 1, pea-soup. 3, a glass of milk hot from the cow set me coughing directly. At 4, a little powdered biscuit and cream. At 5, strong soup with flower of lentils. At 7, stewed plums and cream. Chilly and inclined to cough. Result. Pain in chest at night, but slept from 9 till 5. After dressing rather brisk, walked in corridor. If I can walk, it will be a new era.

"Jan. 3.—At 8, poached eggs, cream, hot milk, little tea.

"Feb. 6, 1884.—Either the climate of Cannes or the open carriages in which the hot sun tempts me to ride, have made my emphysema and chronic bronchitis twice as bad as they were in England. Even without exertion I pant for breath. Sometimes I pant in bed.

"This day, after long threatening to leave the beguiling seaside, I have moved to the Hôtel Richemont. Soup a failure—a mere *consommé*, although the mistress, an obliging Englishwoman, promised me faithfully an English soup. I have to tell her to make the cook stew the meat before she boils it, so to-morrow we shall see. Examined this day by Dr. Frank. He finds considerable induration of the lower liver, but without any pronounced lump—great emphysema, but the bronchial tubes clear. The stomach and intestines seriously disordered.

"What is all this but a general breaking-up of the system? He sees no help or alleviation but the right diet, air, and sleep.

"This first day of Richemont my secretary has prevailed on me to walk to the dairy, where I buy my milk. He carried a chair, into which I sank several times, coming and going. I did not quite get to the dairy. On the way I found a cottage with three female goats. I sat at the cottage door in the sun and drank nearly two half pints of warm goats' milk. It seemed to agree with me. God willing, I will do this every day that the weather is fine!"

These extracts tell, with no further description, the rapid descent. What improvement there seemed to be may be termed illusory. Each bulletin grew more despondent. He signed letters only, dictating them to his secretary, who appears to have been very attentive and

sympathetic. There could have been little doubt, in his own mind, that the end was approaching.

In the midst of this intermittent anguish, moreover, an event occurred which filled him with horror and apprehension.

His nephew Henry, the bright and genial squire, who had but just settled down with his young wife and family in the dear old home at Ipsden, came up to London to consult not one doctor, but several. Those who, in the later summer of 1882, had seen him play cricket with the activity and strength of an undergraduate, to the admiration of all who saw it, must have deemed it incredible that this hale, vigorous man, not burdened with superfluous flesh, a stranger to vice of every description—indeed, a model scholar and gentleman—should be suddenly cast for death.

Yet so it was. To spare his fond wife, who was in ignorance of the imminent danger, he asked to be allowed to occupy his Uncle Charles's empty house. Thither to him flocked the doctors, but their art was unavailing. With rare fortitude he laid himself down on his uncle's bed to die, writing in pencil the tenderest and sweetest farewells to all he cared for. He suffered, as strong men must, who are cut down in their prime; but the fatal internal disease did its work rapidly. It seemed but a few days from the time when he lay down on Charles Reade's bed, and his passing away.

Of all the Reades who, since 1539, had enjoyed the Ipsden estate, his tenure was the shortest, two years and two months only.

So tragic an occurrence would have filled a soul of the coarsest fibre with compassion and grief. Here was a man of middle age whose career had been one continuous, unbroken success; he had inherited a position, not indeed of

great opulence, but of honor. The lines had fallen to him in a pleasant place, for Ipsden is the Eden of England. Yet, as it were in a few short hours, this vision of happiness and beauty ended. No single circumstance could have affected the mind of Charles Reade more acutely. The echoes of the passing bell wafted across the sea must have sounded like notes of warning. From that moment his desire was intense to return home. Debility deferred his journey more than once; and it was not until the horror of dying in a foreign land overpowered him that he mustered resolution to move homewards.

There can be little doubt that the dietary he selected at Cannes was utterly wrong. The liver was the seat of all his maladies; and for a man of mature years, afflicted with a diseased liver, to live on eggs and cream, seems, indeed, infatuation. It came to this, that everything he swallowed both poisoned and caused him internal pain. Weakness of an alarming character supervened, aggravated by the cruel cough. It seemed dubious whether he could reach home alive.

At last his nieces received a telegram summoning them to Boulogne. They had barely recovered from the labor and anxiety of attending on poor Henry St. John Reade's death-bed; but at once hastened across the Channel to find their beloved uncle mentally prostrate, and in a pitiable condition.

He was very deeply attached to them, and their presence for the nonce revived him. By their assistance the journey to Uxbridge Road was painfully accomplished; but there was no hope—death had stamped its mark on his face.

"I am come home to die," was his feeble whisper.

That was the obvious fact; but his eagerness to reach

Shepherd's Bush was caused by a wish he had repeatedly expressed, *viz.*, that he might pass away surrounded by the prayers of his own flesh and blood. There had been a time in his life when his relations with his family were by no means of the most cordial nature. For that, with a magnanimity peculiarly his own, he openly blamed himself, and for many years sought to make amends by acts of kindness and generosity. It was but natural, therefore, that he should crave at the last for the sympathy he valued most; none the less a terrible ordeal, however, was that journey from Boulogne. His nieces feared he would die in the railway-carriage.

He expressed himself very anxious also for a parting interview with the gentle and faithful divine who had been his mainstay during the darkest hours of his life. To his bedside came, by his urgent request, Mr. Graham, and the confidences there exchanged left no doubt as to the state of his mind. He had been preparing for the dread change, and in view thereof had composed his own epitaph—to remain as a confession of the belief he cherished so ardently.

The intelligence of his arrival and critical state aroused universal interest; telegrams rolled in from all parts—not excepting the United States. The leading literary and theatrical celebrities thronged his portals; but by the strict injunctions of the medical men in attendance were, reluctantly, denied admission. The sufferer himself implored that his last hours should be undisturbed; and when a quondam theatrical friend insisted on a moment, just to press his hand, he may not have recognized him, or may have been unwilling to do so. His mind remained fairly unclouded, and in the presence of Mr. Graham he roused himself to join in that friend's commendatory prayer.

The naturally virile constitution of the once muscular man did not, as was expected, give away at once. In weakness and suffering he lingered on, and that for many days beyond the doctors' expectations. The bright light flickered, and flickered; now became obscured, only to burst forth again; now seemed to vanish altogether. Nature struggled bravely, and more than one published bulletin in the daily papers held out false hopes. Even the doctors allowed themselves to be deceived. His brother Compton alone grasped the terrible truth, and watched for the end.

It came—and, by one of those strange coincidences which appeal so forcibly to those whose faith shines brightest, on the afternoon of GOOD FRIDAY.

We need hardly point the symbolism. *Memor esto servi Tui!*

Under a large plain sarcophagus, of Mull granite, in the southeastern angle of Willesden churchyard, by the side of Mrs. Seymour, whose virtues he had extolled in a highly eulogistic epitaph, Charles Reade reposes. It will be for others to say what his life and labor shall be valued at in the time to come. To us he was endeared, not merely by brain, but by heart; not solely because he was great, but because he was good also. He left his faults behind him, to be forgotten. His virtues remain, and shine with increasing lustre. With all the reverence due to a departed soul we append his profession of the faith that was in him, a document written with a dying hand, yet one whose pulses were warmed by high hope:

HERE LIE,
BY THE SIDE OF HIS BELOVED FRIEND,
THE MORTAL REMAINS OF
CHARLES READE,
DRAMATIST, NOVELIST, JOURNALIST.

His last words to mankind are on this stone :

“I hope for a resurrection—not from any power in nature, but from the will of the Lord God Omnipotent, who made nature and me. He created man out of nothing; which nature could not. He can restore man from the dust, which nature cannot.

“And I hope for holiness and happiness in a future life—not for anything I have said or done in this body, but from the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

“He has promised His intercession to all who seek it, and He will not break his word; that intercession once granted cannot be rejected; for He is God, and His merits infinite; a man’s sins are but human and finite.

“‘Him that cometh unto Me I will in nowise cast out.’
‘If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins.’ AMEN.”

APPENDIX.

CHARLES READE literally writhed under the lash of the Rev. Dr. Stanton's aspersions in the American press, destined only too soon to be reprinted in England. Nothing in the whole course of his career stung him so cruelly to the quick as did this bogus psychography of himself perpetrated by a clerical journalist. It was not petty pride. He never blamed his friend Mr. Graham, who in truth was as much the victim of betrayed confidence as he himself was. But he felt bitterly the practical lampoon which upheld one, who had been a harmless Bohemian all through, in the light of a saint. Not condescending to respond to a sham eulogium which really amounted to an impudent libel, he could scarcely sit still under some of the accusations hurled with such cool recklessness at himself and Mrs. Seymour. Hence he sent for a warm friend and brother in art, Mr. Joseph Hatton; and that gentleman, who at the moment had all but arranged to collaborate with him in a new branch of dramatic narration, *viz.*, fiction founded on a sacred subject—an idea which fell through solely on account of Charles Reade's health—responded at once to the call. He found the injured man seated with Mrs. Seymour's portrait in his hand, overpowered by emotion, indeed bathed in tears, yet anxious to tell the truth concerning his most cherished convictions, to prove by chapter and verse those numerous professions of belief which occur in all or nearly all his works. Mr. Hatton, needless to add, offered him the true sympathy of an artist and a man of the world—being alike pained at the spectacle of grief, and unable to conceal the scorn and righteous indignation that

stirred his breast. After some discussion, it was arranged that Charles Reade should tell his own unvarnished tale in a letter to Mr. Hatton, which the latter would communicate to the American press, with his own comments. Yet even then the true gentleman, with a chivalry all his own, made a distinct stipulation that Dr. Stanton should be handled temperately.

"I have often," writes Mr. Joseph Hatton, "thought of describing that memorable day when we discussed the affair—his gentleness, his tenderness, his desire that I should, in discussing the subject, not use 'too strong words.'"

This communication, which enlightened the transatlantic public, has never been reproduced in this country, and we deem it alike due to Charles Reade, and courteous to his generous champion, Mr. Joseph Hatton, to lay it before the readers of this Memoir. It is entitled "CHARLES READE'S FAITH," and addressed to "THE NEW YORK TIMES."

"An article headed 'THE CONVERSION OF CHARLES READE' is going the round of the journals.

"The writer, Dr. Stanton, has not read Charles Reade's works, nor consulted any educated person as to their character; yet he describes his religious opinions, as well as his manners and personal appearance, and gives his own view of certain facts confided to him by the Rev. Charles Graham, with a warning that Mr. Reade shrank from newsmongers' notoriety. The worst of these violations of private intercourse is, that the purveyor of gossip on such terms dares not submit his copy for correction to those whose confidence he has betrayed, and so indelicacy breeds inaccuracy.

"I called upon Mr. Reade the other day, and found him deeply grieved that the most sacred feelings of his heart should have been wormed out of his spiritual adviser in the name of religion, and adulterated for the purposes of trade; but though much distressed at some of Dr. Stanton's figments, he was very desirous not to disturb the general impression that he is weaned from the world, and humbly de-

sires to serve God. This has kept him silent, but he said he would write me a letter and then leave the matter in my hands. I have since received the letter in question:

“‘NO. 19 ALBERT GATE, June 14.

“‘MY DEAR HATTON,—I shall indeed be grateful if you will assist me to correct just two of Dr. Stanton’s errors that wound me cruelly, and can edify nobody.

“‘*First*—That during the lifetime of Mrs. Seymour I held Rationalistic views, and perverted my darling friend’s mind with them; and this was, as he understands, the cause of my remorse after her death.

“‘*Second*—That “in spite of this, Mr. Graham was able to assure me she did not die without Christian hope.”

“‘1. I was instructed in the Christian verities from my cradle by my dear mother, who was a saint and a deeply-read theologian. I have declared my faith in my books many times, and, in face of that public declaration, Dr. Stanton’s statement is really too unscrupulous in itself, and the base of another calumny; for my deceased friend, though a less instructed, was a firm believer. She acted the Gospel more than she talked it; but she could speak too. I remember once, when some sceptical opinions were mooted before her, she said, with a certain majesty and power she could command on uncommon occasions, ‘AND WHAT CAN THEY GIVE THE WORLD TO MAKE UP FOR THE GLORIOUS HOPE THEY WOULD ROB IT OF!’

“‘These were her words to the letter.

“‘2. Mrs. Seymour and I were old people, you know. During the nineteen years I lived in the same house with her she led an innocent life, a self-denying life, and a singularly charitable life. In the exercise of this grace there was scarcely a Scriptural precept she did not fulfil to the letter. She was merciful to all God’s creatures; she took the stranger into her house for months; she cared for the orphan; she visited and nursed the sick; she comforted the afflicted in mind; she relieved the poor in various classes of life, constantly hiding her bounty from others, and sometimes from its very objects. Those charities are still continued out of her funds, and through the influence of her example.

“‘God drew her nearer to him by five months of acute suffering. She bore her agonies (from cancer of the liver) with meek resignation, and sorrow for me, who was to lose her, but none for herself.

“‘Several days before her death she made a distinct declaration of her faith, viz., that she relied not on her good and charitable works, but only on the merits of her Redeemer. Three days before her death she partook of the Holy Communion with fervent responses and such an expression of pious rapture as I never saw on any human face before.

“My grief for her is selfish. You know what I have lost—a peerless creature, wise, just, and full of genius, yet devoted to me. She alone sustained me in the hard battle of my life, and now, old and broken, I must totter on without her, sick, sad, and lonely.

“My remorse is for this. I had lived entirely for the world, and so disquieted her with my cares, instead of leading her on the path of peace, and robbed God of a saint, though not of a believer. I did also afflict myself with doubts of her eternal welfare, but where there is great affection there is always great solicitude. Bereaved Christians torment themselves with this tender anxiety more than bereaved Rationalists do. Mr. C. Graham, when he knew the particulars of her life and death, never shared my anxieties. He removed them entirely. That living evangelist showed me my doubts were in reality doubts of God’s goodness and wisdom, and of his special promises. But the words Mr. Stanton has put into his mouth deny the faith and ignore the charity of her whole life, and cast negative hope, which is positive doubt, upon her condition at her death.

“Christian parents who have lost their young, and all who have cherished a Christian love and buried its object, will surely sympathize with my bleeding heart, and aid me to correct these cruel surmises of brutal gossip.

“For the reasons I gave you, do not object to minor inaccuracies; but kindly make it understood that I do not in my own person endorse any man’s religious animosities. It would ill become *me* to asperse the Church of England or any other community that has bred holy men, whose shoes I am not worthy to tie. I am, my dear Hatton,

“Yours sincerely, CHARLES READE.”

“The public will miss in the above singularly touching letter the pungent philippics of this master of English invective. Under the inspiration of the great author’s gentler mood, I suppose I ought not even to try and supply their place; yet it seems to me that Dr. Stanton has been guilty of an outrage, not only upon his own sacred calling, but upon the profession of journalism. ‘Interviewing’ has become an established institution of the press on both sides of the Atlantic; but it is conducted openly, and always with the consent of the person whose views are sought for publication. Dr. Stanton imports a vicious feature into the collection of news and opinions when he plays the rôle of a detective officer, and uses his intimacy with a clerical brother to prey

upon the secret workings of another man's heart, to proclaim to the world his private thoughts and hopes and feelings; and, worst of all, to distort and misinterpret them at last. If Dr. Stanton had been a trained journalist instead of a clerical scribbler, he would not have failed—at least to describe accurately what he saw and heard; and a long experience of journalism enables me to say that the most daring interviewer would have asked permission or guidance from the person most interested before converting that person's private griefs and sorrows into newspaper 'copy.'

"One cannot read the cold-blooded work of the Rev. Dr. Stanton without feeling that under the cloak of a religious mission he has done a wicked and cruel wrong. Nor has he gone astray unwittingly. Warned that Mr. Reade was sensitive as to anything being said in the papers about his conversations with Mr. Graham, he nevertheless 'works up' into a newspaper article all he has heard in Mr. Graham's family circle. This not being quite strong enough for a genuine sensational letter, he evolves from his own inner consciousness the idea that Mr. Reade has been 'converted' from rationalism to Christianity. Nothing could be more false, not even Dr. Stanton's analysis of Charles Reade's grief. Those who have any knowledge of English classics need not be reminded of the broad, practical Christianity which pervades the writings of Charles Reade, whom Dr. Stanton evidently heard of for the first time the other day. All his works bear witness against this charge of rationalism. 'Peg Woffington,' 'Christie Johnstone,' 'Put Yourself in His Place,' 'The Cloister and the Hearth'—where are we to find nobler lessons of life or a more refreshing Christianity than in these models of masculine fancy and sterling Anglo-Saxon literature? Taking up at random the last-mentioned work, I came upon one of the most heartfelt interpretations of religious faith and fervor in all the range of fiction:

"“Forever!” he cried aloud with sudden ardor; “Chris-

tians live 'forever,' and love 'forever,' but they do not part 'forever.' They part as part the earth and sun, to meet more brightly in a little while. You and I part here for life; and what is our life? One line in the great story of the Church, whose son and daughter we are; one handful in the sand of time, one drop in the ocean of 'forever.' Adieu for the little moment called 'a life.' We part in trouble; we shall meet in peace. We part creatures of clay; we shall meet immortal spirits. We part in a world of sin and sorrow; we shall meet where all is purity and love divine; where no ill passions are, but Christ is, and his saints around him clad in white. There in the turning of an hour-glass, in the breaking of a bubble, in the passing of a cloud, she, and thou, and I shall meet again, and sit at the feet of angels and archangels, and apostles and saints, and beam like them with joy unspeakable, in the light of the shadow of God upon his throne, forever, and ever, and ever."

"I know that the churches put faith above works. That is their business. Christ taught the Gospel of works, the blessing of doing good. Fifteen years ago I met Charles Reade for the first time. I had long known and admired him through his books. Since then I have known him, as all his friends have, as a generous, liberal, warm-hearted Christian gentleman.

"As for poor, dead Mrs. Seymour, I feel inclined to quote against the reverend reporter of the *Independent* the protest of Laertes at the grave of Ophelia, which, with the change of one word, admirably fits the situation:

" 'I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall our sister be
When thou liest howling.'

"JOSEPH HATTON.

"GARRICK CLUB, LONDON, June 17, 1880."

THE END.

Jen. page 197, 198, 200.
At Routh's Conservation in p 212
Beaconsfield's breeding p 391
Mella Pate man 1405.

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